Lingua Franca English as an Expression of Power
Mapping Communication Issues in the Finnish Reception Center

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

Tutkielma tarkastelee Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksen Punavuoren ja Kaarlenkadun toimipisteisiin majoittuneiden arabian- ja venäjänkielisten turvapaikanhakijoiden sekä kyseisten vastaanottokeskuksien neuvonnassa työskentelevien ohjaajien näkemyksiä englannin kielen asemasta lingua franca –kielenä vastaanottokeskuksen kommunikaatioympäristössä. Erityisesti englannin kielen vaikutusta viestintätilanteisiin tarkastellaan kriittisesti: onko englanti parempi vaihtoehto kuin esimerkiksi suomen kielen tai tulkkauksen käyttäminen? Kokevatko turvapaikanhakijat englannin kielen valta-aseman kyseenalaisena? Millaista englantia turvapaikanhakijat ovat oppineet vastaanottokeskuksessa? Tukeeko tällainen englanti turvapaikanhakijoiden asemaa?

Koska englannin kielen käyttäminen lingua franca –kielenä liittyy vastaanottokeskuksen sisäisiin valta-asetelmiin, on tutkielman teoreettiseksi lähtökohdaksi valittu Stewart Cleggin ”circuits of power” (suom. ”vallan virtapiirit”) –teoria, jonka mukaan valtasuhteiden luonne ja vaikutus niihin toimijoihin, joita kohtaan valtaa käytetään, voidaan ymmärtää tarkastelemalla vuorovaikutussuhteita kolmen eri aspektin (engl. ”circuit”) näkökulmasta. Ylemmällä eli makrotasolla olevat kaksi aspektia koskevat ensimmäiseksi vallankäytön oikeuttavia sosiaalisia rakenteita ja toiseksi vallankäytön fyysisiä ilmentymiä, kun taas näiden kahden ylemmän aspektin vaikutuksen alla oleva alemman eli mikrotason aspekti koostuu sellaisista vallankäytön tilanteista, joissa toimijoiden kohdatessa (eli kommunikoidessa) valtasuhteet toteutuvat. Valtaa käyttävän toimijan (tai vallankäytön mahdollistavan toimijan) voisi suomentaa ”portinvartijana” (engl. ”obligatory passage point”), johon kaikkien muiden toimijoiden on vedottava pystyäkseen käyttämään makrotasolla koodattua valtaa. Portinvartijan identiteetti ei rajoitu ainoastaan henkilöiksi miellettäviin toimijoihin, vaan se voi myös olla jotain abstraktia.

Tämä tutkielma käsittelee englannin kieltä portinvartijana, sillä ilman sen käyttöä mikrotasolla ei makrotason vallankäyttö ole mahdollista vastaanottokeskuksessa. Toimijoiden puutteellisen kielitaidon vuoksi englanti on kuitenkin hyvin ongelmallinen portinvartija, eikä valtaa pystytä käyttämään sen kautta yhtä tehokkaasti, kuin jos vallan välineenä olisi jokin toinen kieli (kuten turvapaikanhakijan äidinkieli) tai viestimisen moodi, kuten tulkkaus. Englanti on kuitenkin ainoa turvapaikanhakijat yhdistävä kieli, eikä vastaanottopalveluiden esiasteisen luonteen vuoksi suomea voida käyttää. Lisäksi tulkkauksen laajemmassa käytössä tulevat vastaan taloudelliset ja muut käytännön esteet.

Tutkielma toteutettiin kyselylomakkeiden avulla, jotka jaettiin turvapaikanhakijoille (eli ”asiakkaille”) ja ohjaajille loppukeväästä 2017. Tulokset analysoitiin kvalitatiivisesti kokoamalla ne eri teemojen alle. Selvisi, että asiakkaat suosisivat mieluiten joko suomen kielen suurempaa roolia viestinnässä tai omankielisten tulkkien käyttöä. Englanti koettiin yleisesti joko neutraalina työkalukielenä tai esteenä suomen kielen laajemmalle käytölle; lisäksi jotkut kokivat, että ohjaajat tapaavat käyttää juuri englantia oletusarvoisena kielenä. Toisia asiakkaita käytetään usein tulkkeina tilanteissa, joissa tulkattava asiakas ei osaa englantia, mutta toimivinta näyttäisi asiakkaiden mielestä olevan, jos paikalla neuvonnassa olisi aina ammattimainen tulkki.

Ohjaajat kertoivat käyttävänsä mieluiten englantia suullisessa viestinnässä ja antoivat esimerkkejä usein asiakkaille toistettavista englanninkielisistä sanoista, joista monet ovat yksinkertaistuksia monimutkaisemmista käsitteistä tai ilmauksista. Ohjaajat ilmaisivat tiedostavansa, että suomen kielen käyttäminen voisi olla hyödyllisempää asiakkaiden kannalta, mutta käytännön syihin vedoten moni silti koki englannin kielen tärkeämpänä.

Tutkielman tulosten perusteella olisi suositeltavaa, että suomen kielen asemaa painotettaisiin enemmän vastaanottokeskuksen neuvonnassa. Etenkin englantia ennestään osaamattomille asiakkaille voisi opettaa yksinkertaisen englannin sijaan yksinkertaista suomea, jotta puutteellisena portinvartijana toimiva lingua franca –englanti vaihtuisi asiakkaiden kannalta hyödyllisempään kieleen. Suomen kielen kurssien roolia asiakkaiden sekä lyhyt- että pitkäaikaisen hyvinvoinnin takaajina ei voi myöskään korostaa liikaa ja olisi hyvä, jos kursseille pääsemistä helpotettaisiin ja kurssien saatavuutta parannettaisiin. Lisäksi vastaanottokeskustyöhön palkattavien ihmisten laajempaa kielitaitoa voisi korostaa.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
lingua franca – englanti – ELF – suomi – tulkkaus – kommunikaatio – valta – turvapaikanhakija – pakolainen – vastaanottokeskus

Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited
Keskustakampuksen kirjasto

Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information

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1. Introduction

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations at Geneva in 1951, states that "[e]veryone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." This right is granted to any person with a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." Any attempt to produce a generalization about such a group of people and their lives is thus a task fraught with difficulty. The potential for misrepresentation of their condition is great, and as tempting as it is to find common themes, there is no single generalizable case of the "asylum seeker." Indeed, the only overarching generalization that could be made is a very crudely dichotomous distinction of the *traumatized* asylum seeker who has fled war and persecution, and the largely *untraumatized* asylum seeker who has fled "mere" economic hardship. While on the surface the latter group is not what the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had in mind, their cases remain as poignant as those of the former.

Not all asylum seekers are created equal. Practically any foreign national is legally able to claim asylum in Finland — even citizens of a fellow European Union country. Issues of power quickly become apparent in such cases, as becoming an asylum seeker equals giving up power over one's circumstances and future, to be decided by a system that does not always work according to Western humanist principles. Asylum seekers from other EU countries are a rare occurrence in Finland, but when their requests for asylum are received and inevitably rejected, they can always trust that there is a place for them somewhere. Asylum seekers from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Russia are not in such a blessed position. Their giving up power is more complete, and there are many things around them to remind them of that. In my seven years of working with asylum seekers at two reception centers located in central Helsinki, Finland, I have become fascinated with my own footprint. Is it one that leads asylum seekers to a better place, empowering them in the process, or one that George Orwell would imagine as a "boot stamping on a human face — forever" (Orwell 1949)?

Orwell would agree (albeit in very drastic terms) that language is a powerful and influential tool. To know a language such as English that binds societies together is of immense value. The value of knowing a language that functions as the medium of all interactions within a given society on the other hand cannot be quantified. How does the

asylum system in Finland help asylum seekers acquire the kinds of language skills that will help them in the future? After all, upon becoming asylum seekers, they lose the right to maintain the centrality of their native language and culture in their business lives, and they are suddenly under a pressing obligation to assimilate the norms and linguistic habits of their country of stay into their personal lives. While many asylum seekers are eager to learn the local language upon arrival, their time spent at reception centers plays a bigger role in the long-term development of their will to become part of society. Here I believe that staff-asylum seeker communication has most impact, since the staff is also responsible for encouraging further development of the asylum seekers' language skills.

Thus the premise of this study is the relationship between language and power. English tends to be the *lingua franca* of face-to-face interactions between staff and "clients" (as asylum seekers are commonly referred to by reception center staff; they will be referred to as such in this study as well when talking about staff-client dynamics in-center). But as a vehicle of daily communication, I would posit that lingua franca English is not the most advantageous option, at least when used alone. To gauge the views of Arabic and Russian speaking asylum seeker clients and reception center staff on the role of English as a lingua franca (or ELF), questionnaires were given to both groups at two reception centers in Helsinki. The primary objective of the questionnaires was to find out what kinds of ELF words asylum seekers are exposed to in their daily interactions in the reception centers, and how they view ELF *vis-à-vis* other communicative options, such as the use of Finnish and interpretation into the clients' own native languages.

With the help of Stewart Clegg's circuits of power theory, I argue that the use of English as a lingua franca actually *erodes* the power potential of asylum seeker clients because neither are they learning valuable English during their stay nor are they exposed to enough Finnish to help them cope with outside realities. Paradoxically, while the use of ELF is crucial for the maintenance of power relations, it is never the language of true power. Instead of empowering clients in the long run, the use of ELF provides access to a network that is not applicable to the exigencies of the outside world. Changing this system of communication is not possible because the staff uses English as an obligatory passage point to (inadvertently) demonstrate their power, even though they already possess all the power in any given situation. Members of staff could use Finnish, but instead choose to rely on English in most communicative situations. While they are

acutely aware of the vulnerable position of their clients, they concentrate on other ways of empowerment. This is not necessarily a fault.

To remedy this situation, resources should be allocated to improving and expanding Finnish courses, making them obligatory, and the staff should be encouraged to prefer Finnish over English as the main language of communication in order to foster a sense of inclusion and purpose in the clients. Some concessions must be made to using English in the early stages of a client's stay (although in many cases clients might prefer to use it if they have already acquired fluency in it), seeing that many will not be allowed to stay in Finland. Even in their case, however, teaching Finnish would help them in the short term by empowering them while they are in Finland.

2. Background

2.1. A confusion in terms: *immigrants*, *refugees*, *asylum seekers* or *clients*?

In a sense, asylum seekers can be *immigrants* by virtue of the act of emigrating from one country to another. They can also be regarded as *refugees* if they are fleeing unbearable social circumstances and persecution in their home. However, the label "asylum seeker" does not apply to those immigrants and refugees who are new arrivals to a country, but who also remain unregistered with the authorities: to become an *asylum seeker*, one must make an official request for protection on the grounds that one's life and well-being are under threat (famously by only uttering the word "asylum" on arrival at a border crossing or a police station). Furthermore, the Finnish Immigration Service (*Maahanmuuttovirasto*, or *Migri*) has outlined specific criteria for justified claims for asylum: these are persecution based on the claimant's *origin*, *religion*, *ethnicity*, *political opinions and membership in a certain social group*, and the *belief* on the claimant's part that the country of origin is unable to provide *sufficient personal protection* from threats arising from these circumstances (Maahanmuuttovirasto a).

Any person in the world has the right to claim asylum in another country, even if the country of origin of the claimant is by definition a peaceful one. It is up to the

authorities of a country to investigate each individual claim to asylum and determine the claimant's actual need for international protection. That said, in many countries less than half of asylum seekers are found to be in need of either *primary* or *secondary* protection, meaning that most claims are deemed baseless according to criteria set out in international asylum law (in addition to domestic criteria, since the rate of granting asylum is subject to the political whims of each ruling coalition of a country, and so varies geographically and in time).

Asylum seekers take an active role in their lives, which is not to say that immigrants and refugees would not. But the people who have reached Europe to successfully claim asylum have usually taken extraordinary financial and personal risks. In the year 2015, international media showered attention on the refugees who took to the high seas from North African ports on boats of questionable seaworthiness, hoping to land or be rescued somewhere along the shores of the European Union. Would-be asylum seekers are taken advantage of by various grey industries, such as the businessmen in North Africa who operate boat trips to Europe, or the smugglers working in the border regions of Eastern Europe who arrange illegal passage for refugees looking to get in to a certain country. The exploitation of asylum seekers does not end upon reaching the relative safety of a reception center, but continues in the guise of inadequate legal assistance, for example (Sipilä & Punto 2015). Thus asylum seekers can justifiably be called a highly vulnerable group.

In order to distinguish the group of asylum seekers who are housed in a reception center from asylum seekers as a generalized social group, I have opted to use the word "client" throughout this study whenever referring to the former group; that is also how they are commonly referred to by reception center staff.

2.1.1. Another confusion in terms: *advisors*, *ohjaajat* or *counselors*?

Although many studies have been written about communication issues facing healthcare professionals (e.g. McKeary & Newbold 2010) and immigration agents conducting asylum hearings (e.g. Kalin 1986, Blommaert 2001, Pöllabauer 2004), little is available in English on the communicative role of the group that has the closest relationship with asylum seeker clients: the caretakers working at reception centers and other types of

accommodation whose task is to attend to the daily needs of the modern "huddled masses." While healthcare professionals' and immigration agents' total contact hours with an individual asylum seeker would amount to not even a full twenty-four hours, the staff of reception centers both in Finland and abroad are there from the time an individual asylum seeker is housed in the center and registered there with all the necessary paperwork completed (*majoitustilanne*) to the time a few weeks or months (or possibly even a year) later when the person is transferred to another center or deported to another country. Thus as primary contact persons, the staff shoulder an immense responsibility every day: providing guidance with matters of quotidian character and of local culture, dealing with medical emergencies (which range from acute toothaches to attempts at suicide), organizing contacts with asylum seekers and the surrounding community (e.g. by guiding volunteers, throwing parties to celebrate important occasions such as *Eid al-fitr*, etc.), and giving emotional support in times of crisis, of which there are many in the lives of the dispossessed.

What to call these people in English is a good question. The Finnish word for them is *ohjaaja* (plural *ohjaajat*), and there are three types of *ohjaajat* at the reception centers under study: an *ohjaaja* is any person who by virtue of their educational background or other merits is deemed qualified to work with asylum seekers, whereas a *sosiaaliohjaaja* must possess an advanced degree in social work due to the more demanding responsibilities they are required to take on, such as acting as an *omaohjaaja* or personal counselor to a client. In addition to these two types, there is the *vastaava ohjaaja* who acts as the immediate supervisor of the *ohjaajatiimi*, or team of *ohjaajat*. As to the exact translations of these terms into English, I would suggest using "advisor" for *ohjaaja* and "counselor" for *sosiaaliohjaaja* (since by definition a counselor is a person who forms a deeper kind of relationship with a client, usually in a professional context). The need for translating these terms here arises from the fact that there is no officially-sanctioned English translation for *ohjaaja* (literally "one who directs") with "advisor" being the endemic term used in some reception centers. Furthermore, in reception-center jargon, a *sosiaaliohjaaja* is called a "social advisor," but I do not believe it is the appropriate translation in an L1 context. To circumvent these issues, in this study I have opted to use the original word throughout to refer to both advisors and counselors, and also because "reception center staff" can also refer to the multitude of others working at a reception center, such as security guards and social workers. Furthermore, unless explicitly stated

otherwise, the word “ohjaaja” should be taken to refer to both an *ohjaaja* and a *sosiaaliohjaaja*.

2.2. The asylum process in Finland

In Finland, requests for asylum are registered either by the national police or the Finnish Border Guard agency (*Rajavartiolaitos*). These authorities are responsible for confirming the claimant’s identity, investigating the route taken to Finland and how the country was entered, and in certain cases also organizing age and language tests to corroborate claims made during individual interview sessions (Länsivuori & Setälä 2012:5). After the police or the border agency has established the claimant’s identity, the Finnish Immigration Service (*Maahanmuuttovirasto*) conducts asylum hearings where the claimant testifies why they are seeking asylum and presents evidence to support their claim. Depending on the claimant’s country of origin, the asylum request is handled as part of either a “normal” or an “expedited” procedure (*nopeutettu menettely*). Asylum hearings are processed in times that vary much according to the difficulty of the case, as well as the volume of overall asylum cases. At the beginning of the year 2015, the median time for handling a case from hearing to decision was 157 days (Maahanmuuttovirasto b). Pending decision, all identity documents are surrendered for inspection by the Immigration Service.

There are three types of decisions that are handed out by the Immigration Service: the first, and rarest, is an official refugee status (*pakolaisasema*), granted to those who are recognized as being in need of international protection. In addition to this, two types of residence permit are granted to those asylum seekers who do not meet the conditions for obtaining asylum in accordance with Finnish asylum policy: the second type of decision is a residence permit granted on the basis of a need for subsidiary protection (*toissijainen suojelu*), while the third type is a residence permit granted on the basis of humanitarian protection (*humanitaarinen suojelu*). Subsidiary protection is granted on the basis of being “in danger of [the] death penalty, execution, torture or other treatment or punishment that is inhuman or violates human dignity in [the claimant’s] home country or country of permanent residence.” To qualify, the claimant should also be “unable to return to [their] home country or country of permanent residence without running into serious personal danger because of an armed conflict prevailing there”

(Maahanmuuttovirasto c). Humanitarian protection on the other hand is granted to those who are "unable to return to [their] home country or country of permanent residence due to an environmental catastrophe that has taken place there or because of a poor security situation there" (ibid.). The police notifies claimants of negative decisions; notification of positive decisions usually does not involve a separate visit to the police.

2.3. The Finnish reception center

Communication cannot be divorced from its physical context, which is why this study always talks of a *communicative environment*. Many asylum seeker clients spend the majority of their waking hours inside a reception center, and so it is important to know something about the conditions in them, and also about the kinds of chances and opportunities a client has both inside and outside the center's walls. Many aspects of "reception center life" can be ascribed to the power imbalance that society willingly imposes on asylum seekers: the kinds of restrictions produced by rules and the curtailing of public funds, the scarcity of space and amenities due to the non-purpose built nature of a reception center building, the decisions available to a client if they are already connected to people in Finland, and the like. For clients, reception centers are homes, but they are never happy places.

Reception centers have mushroomed in Finland in recent years, largely due to the large influx of Middle Eastern refugees into Europe that began in 2014. According to the Finnish Immigration Service (Maahanmuuttovirasto 2017), at the end of 2016 there were 121 reception centers operating around Finland; many of these centers were opened during the year 2015, with some of them already closing during 2016 due to a drastic decrease in the numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Finland. In 2016 the Finnish Red Cross owned the most reception centers, numbering 87, while a number of private sector companies also operated centers, the largest among them being Luona Oy with seven centers in the Helsinki region. The state of Finland and various municipal governments also operate some of the oldest reception centers, to which the centers under study belong.

These centers are the Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu units of the Helsinki reception center (*Helsingin vastaanottokeskus*). Opened in 2009, both centers occupy buildings that previously served as budget hotels (the *Martta-hotelli* and *Hotelli Fenno* respectively).

Extensive renovations were done in order to convert the buildings into suitable reception centers; in the case of the two units, this meant a downgrade in the level of the facilities available to asylum seeker clients (for example, in Punavuori, the small sauna facilities of the hotel era were converted into a *sosiaalitila*, or employee changing room). In both centers rooms were stripped of the few amenities they had, though in Kaarlenkatu the old refrigerators and televisions inherited from *Hotelli Fenno* were left in some rooms.

The Helsinki reception center itself is an older institution than its two current units, having been established in 1995 as the Kyläsaari unit, which was closed in 2012. The Helsinki reception center is a so-called "transit center" (*transit-keskus*), which is a reception center meant to house asylum seekers for relatively short periods of time, or until their case has been heard by immigration officials. The ideal length of stay at such a center is two or three months or less, but typically many clients are housed there for any length of time from half a year up to a full year. As a rule, transit centers are located in or near the cities where the Immigration Service has offices where hearings can be conducted.

After completion of their asylum hearing, the clients are transferred to a "waiting-period center" (*odotusajan keskus*), which are centers designed to house clients for longer periods of time. Some waiting-period centers consist of individual apartments with the reception desk open only during certain hours in the daytime, while others bear more resemblance to transit centers with a reception desk that is open around the clock and rooms that are all located in a single building, which arguably gives the reception center a more institutional feel. Clients typically stay at a waiting-period center until they receive a decision regarding their case. Reception center policy favors being at a waiting-period center at the time of receiving a positive asylum decision, due to the fact that it is possible to arrange for accommodation and municipal services at a smaller locality, where waiting-period centers are typically located. Clients receiving positive decisions while in Helsinki (due to prolonged stay at a transit center, for example) risk missing out on various forms of assistance from the municipality, which is partly due to a conscious decision by the authorities, who try to encourage the settlement of asylum seekers and refugees across the country instead of only the major cities, especially Helsinki. However, the usual trend has been that after receiving a positive decision and spending a year or two at a locality somewhere in Finland, former asylum seekers tend to move to places where there are more opportunities and more of their compatriots, which often means Helsinki.

Across the country, clients also have the option of living outside the reception center in what is termed "private accommodation" (*yksityismajoitus*, more recently *kotimajoitus* in the media, or "home accommodation"). This means that they cannot be transferred away from Helsinki, but instead await their decision there. People offering accommodation are often blood relatives, romantic partners, or friends of the client. They are less frequently complete strangers who offer accommodation out of sympathy or the will to support. However, living at a reception center is encouraged for various reasons, most importantly because of the ease of reaching a person in case of emergency.

In addition to the *ohjaajat* who act as intermediaries between clients and officials (and various other reception center staff), the Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu centers employ nurses and social workers who have offices in the building and are available on weekdays. In 2017, on-site security guards were permanently added to the ranks of the personnel working in the centers to ensure the safety of clients and staff. Despite the presence of guards, clients registered as occupants in the center are free to come and go as they please, and they do not have to report to anyone at the reception (clients sometimes believe the staff is there to track their every move, which is not true).

Both Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu can accommodate up to 200 clients, although in practice, the number of clients at the centers at any one time does not exceed 180. In 2015, the mean number of clients in the Punavuori center has been somewhere between 140–170, while the numbers in Kaarlenkatu have been slightly higher due to the larger number of rooms: most rooms there can accommodate two to four people, while the smallest rooms in Punavuori can hold four to six people, with the biggest room in the center holding up to ten people. However, it is the policy of the center to try to avoid filling rooms to the capacity that is stated on paper, since the size of the four-person rooms for example is actually fairly small, coming close to the dimensions of budget cabins on cruise ships. The ideal as expressed by staff would be to keep three people in a four-person room, five people in a six-person one, and so on. This is not always possible however, and so four-person rooms do often hold four people, to the chagrin of the occupants who often complain of having to live in packed conditions. Due to this, it is deliberate policy to try to put people in rooms according to the languages spoken, since mutual comprehension is seen to ease relations in cramped spaces; the ability to communicate is essential in situations of conflict.

Both Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu are “food service centers” (*ruokakeskus*), and thus daily life in the centers is regimented by mealtimes, of which there are three: breakfast between 9:00–10:00 am, lunch between 12:00–1:30 pm, and dinner between 5:00–6:30 pm. At dinner clients are given a food bag which is meant to last for the night. Single clients staying in food service centers only receive €91.52 per month in benefits that are meant to cover various expenses (*vastaanottoraha*; families and couples are eligible for more), and food is thus a frequent point of contention in the centers, as clients cannot afford to buy their own food for an entire month and must eat the somewhat bland *laitosruoka* (food prepared on a commercial scale in large municipal kitchen facilities) offered to them. Clients with families especially often voice their wish to be allowed to prepare their own food, as do the clients who would like to have more autonomy.

Mail is handed out throughout the day, and is often one of the most anticipated moments, because any one day could bring an invitation to come to a police interview or an asylum hearing. Appointments with nurses and social workers are also some of the most sought-after pieces of mail, since nearly all clients at the center are dogged by worries and physical ailments.

Work opportunities in the centers are limited, though needed. Asylum seekers are required by law to wait for a few months before being allowed to engage in paid employment; the waiting times are either three months for those who have entered the country with a passport, or six months for those who have entered the country without any kind of identity documents. These waiting times are a frequent cause of frustration for asylum seekers. Volunteer work opportunities offered by the centers are also scarce, though each week clients are asked to help kitchen staff clean the dining areas. This kind of activity is well-received by most clients, who are always longing for useful activities in the center.

2.3.1. Language policy in the reception center

The official language policy of the Helsinki reception center follows the legal requirements set in the “Law concerning the reception of persons seeking international protection” (*Laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta*, 2011/746), which is also known as “reception law” (*vastaanottolaki*). The law states that asylum seekers are

entitled to receive information translated or interpreted into either their L1 (or native) language, or a language that they are justifiably able to understand. The latter point ensures that the reception center can also arrange for an interpreter to interpret into a client's L2 (or second) language, due to the occasional difficulties of obtaining interpreters for rarer languages, such as Fulani and Luganda. The reception center is required by law to arrange an interpreter to communicate any matter concerning the rights and responsibilities of an asylum seeker.

The staff of the Helsinki reception center is predominantly L1 Finnish speaking. However, in recent years there have been staff members who are native speakers of Arabic, Russian, Somali, Dari, Estonian, German, and even Amharic. While the hiring policies of the reception center do not specify the need for possessing communicative abilities in any other languages than Finnish and English, in practice many staff members are able to speak one or two additional foreign languages, such as French, German, Russian, Persian, or others.

Professional interpreting services are also at the disposal of the staff in situations where their use is justified as essential to ensuring the well-being of clients. In normal interactions at the reception the use of professional interpreters is not possible, however, and so clients and staff are left to their own devices. Machine translation is one option used by the staff to reach clients in case no common language exists. A picture card exists at the reception which allows clients to point to items they wish to borrow from the staff, such as games, electric kettles, and sewing kits.

Written messages abound inside the reception center. Some are reminders of rules and best practices, others invitations to events, courses, activities, and so on. English is the primary medium of these messages, although the staff tends to translate all text into any of the languages available to them, including Russian and Arabic (cf. Appendix II for pictures of selected messages). Although most of the Arabic-speaking clients would not be able to understand the English of the messages, practice has shown that they have adopted certain strategies, such as using machine translation to decipher the content of the messages that have been left untranslated. Finnish is rarely used in written communication, except in certain standard notices and invitations to events.

The relationship between English and Finnish is not a straightforward one. English is obviously favored in staff-client face-to-face communication by virtue of its lingua franca status (cf. section 2.4.1. for discussion of English as a lingua franca). However, the

use of Finnish is generally encouraged: at mail times for example, the staff often asks clients to express their room numbers in Finnish. A few clients learn basic communicative Finnish relatively early since their arrival, and the inchoate language skills of such clients are always readily fostered by staff at the expense of English as a lingua franca (ELF).

Finnish courses are offered by both reception centers, though attending them is not obligatory. As of 2017 Finnish classes are organized five times a week at the Punavuori center, and due to the huge demand for learning Finnish among the clients, the Finnish Red Cross, the Africans and African-Europeans Association (AFAES ry), and the Visio learning center also organize teaching sessions and discussion groups that meet once or twice a week. In addition to these, the *ohjaajat* direct clients to courses taught outside the center, even though clients must enroll in them independently. However, due to staying in transit centers, clients run the risk of not completing these courses before they are transferred to waiting-period centers. Furthermore, the courses outside the centers are usually not free of charge, and as course fees are not automatically reimbursable, clients are obligated to contact their social worker at the center to apply for reimbursement for each course separately. This system of offering Finnish courses is not ideal, and as this study will argue in the conclusion (p. 66), reforming it should be a priority.

2.4. On the nature of power

Power is a multifaceted concept that also incorporates language as one of its outward expressions. Where there exist power relations between individual people or people and institutions, there is also language as a necessary component making such relations possible. To better conceptualize the workings of linguistic power relations inside a reception center, it is necessary to find a general, workable model of power relations. The most relevant of such models is the *circuits of power* theory formulated by Stewart Clegg in his book *Frameworks of Power* (Clegg 1989), which, in the words of Deji (2011:267), "likens the production and organizing of power to an electric circuit board consisting of three distinct interacting circuits: *episodic*, *dispositional*, and *facilitative*." These three circuits function either at a micro or macro level (cf. figure 1).

The episodic circuit is constituted of "irregular exercise of power as agents address feelings, communication, conflict, and resistance in day-to-day interrelations," all of

which take place at the micro level. This is essentially a job description of what the *ohjaajat* are doing every day as responders and mediators. As such, this is the most basic level in which language manifests itself as the primary vehicle of power at the reception center, and is also the level that is the focus of this study. The outcomes of the episodic circuit are either *positive* or *negative*, which in real terms means that from face-to-face interactions at this level the reception center client either comes out with a sense of empowerment or defeat.

As Deji (2011) further explains, the dispositional circuit is constituted of "macro level rules of practice and socially constructed meanings that inform member relations and legitimate authority." From the clients' point of view, one of the most salient expressions of this level is the information given to them in their own language at newcomers' briefings (*infot uusille asiakkaille*) at some point during their first month of living in the center. These briefings inform them of the social realities on the ground, demarcate physical boundaries ("you can either live here or in 'private accommodation'"), and lay down the rules of proper conduct ("respect the staff and each other"). The source material for these briefings is constituted of both unwritten rules which are the fruit of years of experience and the actual written rules of the center, a copy of which is always given to new clients upon arrival. The Finnish asylum law (*vastaanottolaki*) is also part of this level (among other things, it states that every asylum seeker has the right to receive all necessary services in their mother tongue), as are the written reminders of both well thought-out and *ad hoc* policies of the reception center in the form of multilingual signs hanging on the center's walls (cf. Appendix II). Furthermore, who is deemed qualified to work at a reception center especially with regard to language skills (or the lack thereof) is delineated in policy notes that are either implicitly understood or explicitly distributed by the City of Helsinki as memos to senior staff.

The facilitative circuit, again according to Deji (2011), is constituted of "macro level technology, environmental contingencies, job design, and networks, which empower or disempower and thus punish or reward, agency in the episodic circuit." On this level we find the effects of the actual physical space of the reception center (Punavuori for example has a very small reception area, cf. section 2.3.), and of the funds allocated to the reception center, especially for hiring staff and the use of interpreters whenever the need for them arises (primarily in the form of telephone interpreting, which can become a very expensive service on a Sunday evening in Finland, and thus its

frequent use might be frowned upon by cost-wary senior staff). Seemingly mundane things such as food are also an expression of this circuit: the food served at the reception center is invariably *Finnish* food, the same food that is prepared in large commercial kitchens to be delivered to ordinary Finnish schools, workplaces, etc. It is a powerful sign to the clients that their culinary needs are not catered for, but that the reception center is the one with the power to decide, and in Finland the food is Finnish.

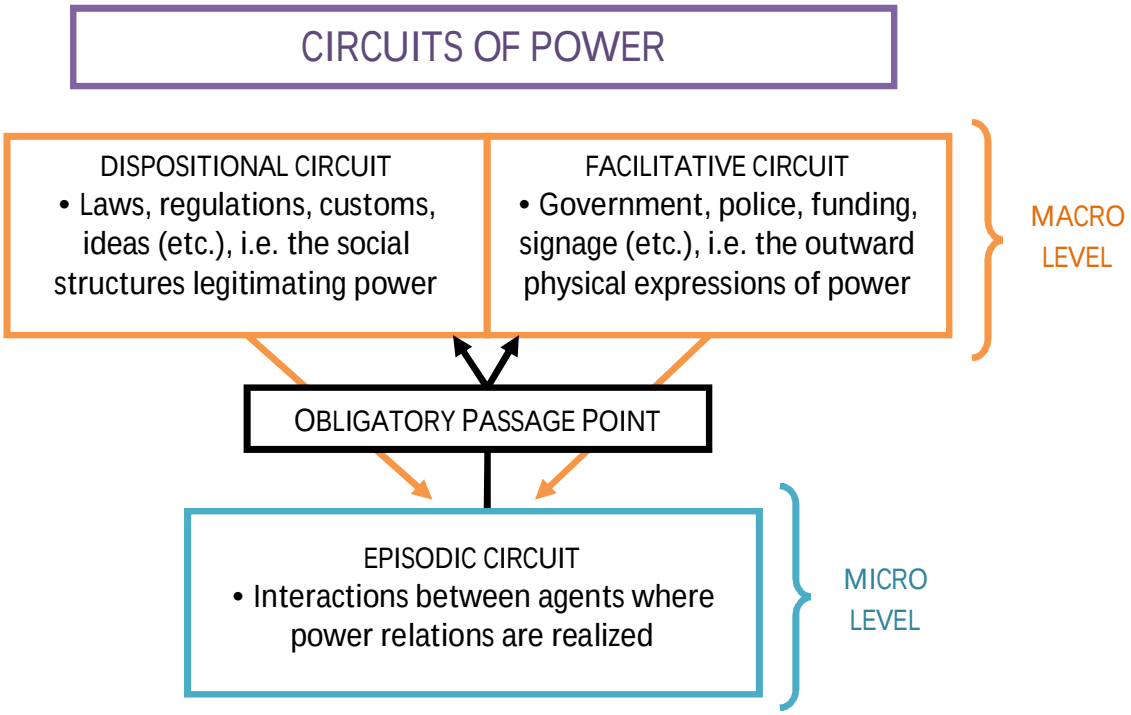


Figure 1. Clegg's circuits of power theory.

While all three circuits are independent of one another, they interact at *obligatory passage points*, which Clegg defines as "channels for empowerment or disempowerment" (Clegg 1989, quoted in Deji 2011:267). The notion of the obligatory passage point or OPP is crucial for understanding the powerful role of language in interactions, since I would argue that language itself functions as one, more so than individuals (cf. figure 9). Individuals at the episodic circuit are capable of making sure their use of language is understood; language at the dispositional and facilitative circuits is impersonal, its use never questioned by those who possess power.

Figure 2 (*Punavuori reception center*). Language as an obligatory passage point: even posters meant to empower communicate the need to know English, in this case if an asylum seeker wishes to find a lost relative.

At its simplest, an OPP is any actor without which further action becomes impossible. The term was coined by Callon (1986) in his seminal paper about researchers in France forming a "Holy Alliance" with fishermen to save the dwindling scallop population of Saint-Brieuc Bay, on which the livelihoods of the latter depended, in the hopes of inducing the scallops to multiply. While the relevance of the story to asylum seekers is not immediately evident, it is highly illustrative of the ineluctable relationship between obligatory passage points and power. Callon and his team of researchers became the leaders of "several populations" consisting of "learned experts, unpolished fishermen,

and savoury crustaceans." A network was created in which all actors were of equal weight despite the researchers' inherent power position, bestowed upon them by their knowledge of advanced scallop farming techniques that had been used in Japan to ensure the livelihoods of local fishermen. In this case, the researchers' exclusive knowledge functioned as an OPP on which the other two components of the network depended; more importantly, they also came to publicly represent the voices of all the actors, assuming even more power that way. Yet some of the fishermen ended up rejecting the researchers' authority because after a while certain scallops failed to "act" in the way the researchers had predicted, i.e. they failed to anchor to collectors immersed in the sea. One night before Christmas some of the more skeptical fishermen went out and fished all the scallops, which became the undoing of the network the researchers had created. In claiming to represent the fishermen's cause, the researchers had overlooked dissenting voices and put too much faith in the stabilizing power of their OPP. In the end, the OPP of the researchers could be bypassed, but only to the detriment of the main beneficiaries (the fishermen) and the entire network. At the end of his study, Callon came to the sober conclusion that "to speak for others is to first silence those in whose name we speak" (Callon 1986:216).

Asylum seekers are in a worse position than the scallop fishermen because they do not have recourse to anything other than appeals to the facilitative and dispositional circuits (i.e. law and practice), which listen poorly to the appeals of even those who act as OPPs in the episodic circuit (e.g. the *ohjaajat*, or then the lawyers who file appeals against negative decisions). While the *ohjaajat* profess not to speak in the name of asylum seekers because they are expected to act as impartial agents in the best interests of the latter, due to their role as intermediaries they are not safe from the implications of Callon's conclusion. Namely, to "silence others" is to deny them the right to use their mother tongue and to force them back to a childlike state of dependence on others for food, shelter, and guidance. A major argument against such a line of thought is that silencing is unavoidable, even necessary, because asylum seekers have entered a foreign system in a foreign country with new concepts and new vocabulary to learn. They cannot be expected to be able to speak for themselves and need time to adapt. The *ohjaajat* also cannot be expected to cater to the multitude of languages spoken by asylum seekers, since anyone in the world can claim asylum.

Yet I would argue that there are ways of empowering asylum seekers that give them a voice. They are a diverse group whose educational backgrounds vary, but if we are to

believe findings by Antonovsky (1987) and Brekke & Brochmann (2014) about the capabilities of refugees, it seems that the keys to actual empowerment lie in understanding one's environment and having the capabilities to influence outcomes within that environment. While educational background does play a role in the degree of perceived power that an asylum seeker possesses, the effects of having a sense of control over one's immediate surroundings cannot be underestimated. Here adequate knowledge of language becomes indispensable, especially if relevant vocabulary is introduced. Indeed, the kind of vocabulary that *empowers*.

The role of *ohjaajat* is an influential one, since at the episodic circuit they are obviously in charge of their clients' immediate circumstances. Thus there exists a relationship of immediate dependency between *ohjaajat* and clients, yet there are scholars such as Turner (2005) who would argue that such a relationship is not intrinsically power-laden. Rather, Turner argues that power is based on qualities such as persuasion, authority, and coercion, and that since power is the potential to influence, it is consequently *influence* which is the exercise of power. This goes against Clegg's conception of power, which relies on dependency in the form of OPPs, but echoes Antonovsky (1987) and Brekke & Brochmann (2014). If we take Turner's notion and apply it to language, the power of the *ohjaajat* is not as certain anymore. Instead of language itself acting as a barrier, the successful exercise of power comes down to how well the *ohjaajat* are able to use language to uphold assumptions about their own standing in the system. As Harris & Sherblom (2011) note with regard to power in group settings, socialization processes are responsible for maintaining hierarchies of power, which come to be taken for granted by participants. An asylum seeker knows they are in another culture and that they are bound by different laws, and that the *ohjaajat* are there to help them make sense of their environment. As the *ohjaajat* know the local language and probably possess superior knowledge of English, we could suppose that it is more advantageous for an asylum seeker to listen to and imitate their code. As I will argue later, however, imitating the *ohjaajat* is not the best course of action (cf. 4.1.).

Figure 3 (*Punavuori reception center*). Asylum seekers face an unfamiliar code and an erroneous written standard of English. They are still required to comply.

Another way of conceiving power is offered by the Actor–Network Theory (ANT), which, while not entirely relevant in its details to our discussion about power and language, offers a take on power that combines Clegg's OPPs with Turner's emphasis on influence as the exercise of power. In fact, OPP is a concept that would normally be associated with ANT (Walton 2013), which adds to its relevance here.

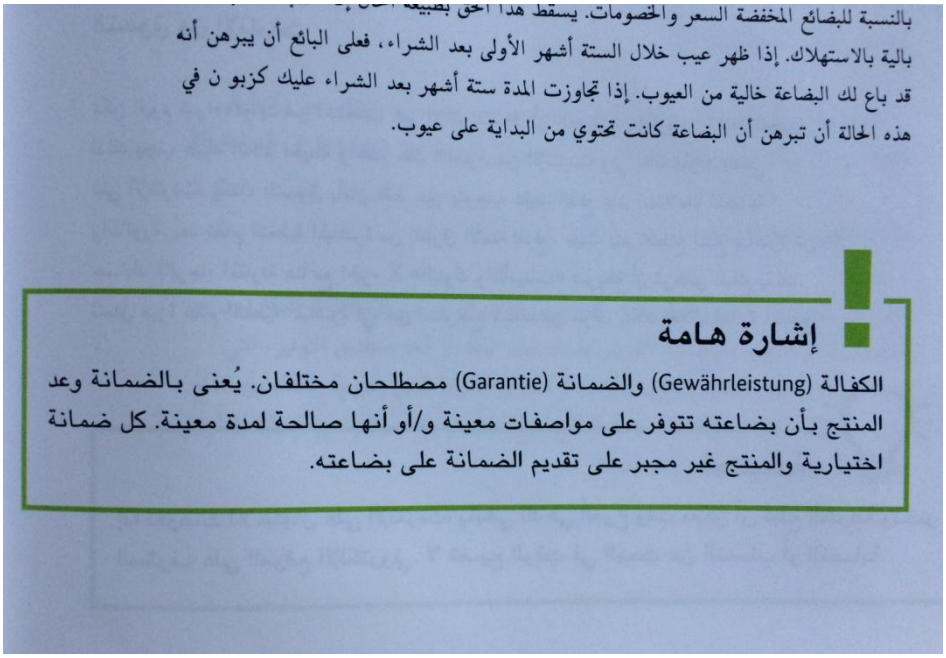
ANT conceptualizes relationships between actors in a network in hermeneutic terms, i.e. "both actor and network constitute, define and redefine each other" (Clegg et al. 2006:238). Actors can be both human and non-human. "Power necessarily resides in the dynamic social relations constituted in the network" (ibid.), meaning that all actors possess power in the form of influence. This way of conceptualizing power implies that by virtue of being a component in a network, asylum seekers do possess a degree of influence, and therefore power. However, I would argue that that is not the case. Firstly, their power positions are undermined by their inadequate access to the OPP that the *ohjaajat* control, which again is language. To make them equal actors in a network, mere access to (schematic) knowledge is insufficient (even though Antonovsky would likely

disagree). They should also, in Marxist terms, own the means of production, in other words be given access to the kind of language that empowers them by endowing them with a native-like understanding of their surroundings. Facts should not be separated from language, and vice versa (cf. figure 4 for a German example of this idea).

Secondly, as the existence of a stable actor network depends on the embodiment and embedding of actors' interests in "material artifacts, such as texts, programs, skills, dispositions, machines — all those phenomena on which the achievement of [one's] agency depends" (Callon 1991:143), asylum seekers are at a clear disadvantage: they are poorly able to influence policies at the dispositional and facilitative circuits, or the system controlling the conditions to which they are subject(ed). Social relations between asylum seekers and their host nation are far from dynamic. An asylum seeker's pleas do not amend policy; if the facts surrounding their case fail to meet certain predefined criteria for granting asylum (cf. 2.2.), they will face deportation even to a country at war*. Legislation pertaining to the status of refugees and immigrants is first and foremost protective of a nation's right to choose its citizenry. Even treatment of wealthy foreigners as second-class citizens is *senso comune* in the Gramscian sense. Those in need cannot be expected to fare better. Writing about the "stigma" attached to being an asylum seeker, Schuster calls them "legitimate targets for hostility" because they have "taken their future into their own hands" by arriving in Europe "uninvited and unsolicited" (Schuster 2003:246). The problem is that asylum seekers are by all accounts equal actors in a network but are simultaneously both expected and not expected to have agency in it: an active asylum seeker "steals jobs and women," while a passive one is "a drain on society." Although the dispositional and facilitative circuits of a network do indeed embody the interests of actors, these actors are *not* asylum seekers, but rather nation states seeking stability in controlling foreign elements. The upshot of this is the fact that in many nation states in Europe there is currently no stable actor network in existence — protests by asylum seekers have become commonplace in the 2010s, while the immigrant groups that have already established themselves in different European societies report feeling increasingly alienated from their hosts. While ANT is not a useful framework

*Even as of 2017 Finland is known to deport asylum seekers to countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, while an injunction by the Court of Justice of the European Union against deportations to *Greece* of so-called Dublin returnees has been in place since 2011 based on humanitarian grounds.

for understanding power relations of a linguistic nature within a reception center, it offers a broader point of view that unmasks the inherent power imbalances between a society and those who seek to enter it. What makes the reception center special is the fact that it is there that all things come together. The *ohjaajat* support asylum seekers but also face the difficult task of acting as representatives of the dispositional and facilitative circuits. They are, in a sense, the ultimate OPP.


بالنسبة للبضائع المخفضة السعر والخصومات. يسقط هذا الحق بطبيعة
بالية بالاستهلاك. إذا ظهر عيب خلال الستة أشهر الأولى بعد الشراء، فعلى البائع أن يبرهن أنه
قد باع لك البضاعة خالية من العيوب. إذا تجاوزت المدة ستة أشهر بعد الشراء عليك كزبو ن في
هذه الحالة أن تبرهن أن البضاعة كانت تحتوي من البداية على عيوب.

إشارة هامة

الكفالة (Gewährleistung) والضمانة (Garantie) مصطلحان مختلفان. يُعنى بالضمانة وعد المنتج بأن بضاعته تتوفر على مواصفات معينة و/أو أنها صالحة لمدة معينة. كل ضمانة اختيارية والمنتج غير مجبر على تقديم الضمانة على بضاعته.

Figure 4. The text in this excerpt from a booklet published by the German government does not translate the untranslatable, but rather the terms that empower. (Source: مرحباً إلى ألمانيا: معلومات للمهاجرين. 2014. Berlin: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, p. 108.)

2.4.1. The interplay between power and English as a lingua franca

Asylum seeker clients and the *ohjaajat* (staff) of Finnish reception centers both constitute groups whose members do not typically speak English as their L1 (or first) language, but are rather members of the so-called *expanding circle*. The expanding circle refers to speakers of English who come from countries where English is primarily treated as a foreign language, and where it has not been institutionalized as an additional language,

unlike in the countries that belong to the *outer circle* (Bhatt 2001:530). While Finnish reception centers also host many clients from the outer circle countries (e.g. India, Gambia, Ghana), most would generally represent the expanding circle, albeit unequally with regard to their level of proficiency in English. When communicating with each other and with *inner circle* users of English who come from traditionally native English speaking countries, members of the outer and expanding circles use English as a *lingua franca*, which is the term applied to any "contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom [it] is the chosen foreign language of communication" (Firth 1996, cited in Seidlhofer 2004:211).

The reception centers under examination offer a glimpse into a fascinating state of affairs, in which Finland is among the world's highest ranking countries in the expanding circle in terms of English proficiency, whereas the countries that most asylum seekers come from (Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria) rank fairly low (Ef.fi 2017). This begs the question of whether or not the *ohjaajat* treat asylum seekers as equals in English as a lingua franca (ELF) situations. Here we find two opposing points of view. According to the first, various aspects of power that come from possessing superior language skills most likely do have a negative influence on the behavior of the *ohjaajat* at the episodic circuit (cf. 2.4.), as a few studies (Blommaert 2001, Blommaert 2009, Guido 2012) have pointed out that language in lingua franca use is prone to actualizing power politics between interlocutors, usually in favor of the more proficient party. Such linguistic power asymmetries become especially apparent in situations where ELF is an imperfect vehicle of thought on either side, leading to communicative breakdown, sometimes with serious consequences. For example, it has been claimed that certain asylum hearings have resulted in negative decisions being accorded in part due to cultural and linguistic misunderstandings ascribable to the effects of ELF as an imprecise medium of communication (cf. Blommaert 2001, Demulder 2012 and Kalin 1986). Although communicative failings at the reception desk of a reception center are less likely to bear severe consequences, their effects should not be taken lightly as they can affect the personal rapport (or lack thereof) that has been established between client and *ohjaaja*.

The second view (Communication Accommodation Theory or CAT) holds that in communicative situations people tend to adjust their speech, vocal patterns, and gestures to accommodate to others (Gallois *et al*. 1995), even in situations where apparent

linguistic power asymmetries exist. This would ostensibly mitigate the effects of the power imbalance created by the other person's inferior language skills, but is in actuality another aspect of power use. As social and political animals, to make interactions run smoothly and to create rapport in the hopes of influencing (i.e. gaining power over) the other, humans try to match almost all aspects of their speech, such as accent, speech rate, word choice, and syntax, with that of their interlocutor. Often without realizing it, they also adjust nonverbal signals such as their gaze and the frequency of head nods to match their interlocutor's cues (Bi *et al*. 2014). Called behavioral mirroring, it has been found to be a highly successful strategy in creating mutual empathy and establishing social cohesion (Sanchez-Burks *et al*. 2009). Accommodation and mirroring are arguably a major aspect of power use in ELF encounters, as successful communication between non-native speakers of English who do not possess advanced skills in the language requires using various accommodation strategies to ensure that complex verbal messages are understood. As is recounted later on in this section and section 4.1., the *ohjaajat* employ a number of accommodation strategies to facilitate communication.

Studies by House (1999) and Kaur (2011) offer an alternative view of the relationship between accommodation and ELF. Non-native speakers of English who come from different "lingua-cultural" backgrounds have a "shared incompetence" in the language (Varonis & Gass 1985, quoted in Kaur 2011:113), which means that "the lingua franca context causes participants to be less focused on matters of cultural difference as they need to grapple with the medium of communication in their efforts to achieve shared understanding and successful communicative outcomes" (ibid.). These results by Kaur (2011) echo earlier findings by House (1999:84), whose Culture Irrelevance Hypothesis underlines the "non-influence of ELF speakers' native linguaculture" in their dealings with one another, specifically when communication problems arise. What these studies seem to imply is that accommodation strategies function very differently in encounters between fluent speakers of a language than in encounters between speakers with an incomplete knowledge of it. If culture becomes irrelevant, then so do power asymmetries, since the cognitive burden of making sense of the other overrides all other concerns. It seems that speakers tend to *converge* with their interlocutor more if their incompetence is shared.

Yet ELF situations are rarely encounters between absolute equals if we look at the context of most situations. A Japanese tourist in Paris might "share an incompetence"

with a French waiter, but the waiter is not obliged to converge in any way due to the fact that they are on their own turf, and thus possess all power in any communicative situation. The reception center offers a similar setting: the clients are obligated to understand the linguistic norms of the *ohjaajat* (cf. figure 3), but the *ohjaajat* in turn as official representatives of the dispositional and facilitative circuits (cf. 2.4.) are not accountable for failed communication outcomes. In fact, Kaur (2011:113) states that communication problems in lingua franca encounters are the usual result of the "failure of the minority speaker to adhere to the norms, both cultural and linguistic, of the [dominant] *majority* group." This observation trumps House's Culture Irrelevance Theory by implying that culture is always present in encounters where two speakers, though sharing an incompetence, both respectively belong to a minority or majority group. Ergo, language does not make actors equal in a situation of power imbalance, it divides them.

Gallois *et al*. (1995) have written about the dividing effect of differing ELF norms among speakers possessing more or less equal English language skills, concluding that at a certain level different ways of speaking English result in poor relations among people. In another study, Gallois & Callan (1991) concluded that to ensure good relations with members of their host society, immigrants must be taught about the norms that govern convergence in each host community, since these communities may actually find that the immigrants' use of convergence strategies is inappropriate to their status and the norms of the given situation. Gallois & Callan (1991) also note that certain members of host communities may actually hold ideas about how immigrants should use the language of the majority. Here we encounter the importance of *schematic knowledge* (or knowledge that defines an individual as a member of a community, as defined in Pölzl & Seidlhofer 2006): to gain the approval of their host community, asylum seekers (and immigrants in general) must be taught not only the intricacies of culture, but also how the local culture and language work together. This poses a conundrum, however. The language of Finland is Finnish, yet the language of the reception center is *English*. In order to foster a sense of belonging in a community in asylum seeker clients, it follows that Finnish should be the language of the reception center, inasmuch as it functions as the language of the society which virtually *all* asylum seeker clients wish to enter.

Finnish could already be said to be the language of the reception center in the sense that it is only a tool that is used to create *shared schemata* with the goal of both empowering clients and bringing them under the firm control of the system. The ideas

expressed about empowerment in 2.4. tell us that understanding one's environment (schematic knowledge) and having the capabilities to influence outcomes within that environment are the keys to real empowerment. The main venue for conveying forms of schematic knowledge at the reception center are the information sessions (*infot*) for new clients that are organized every two weeks. These are meant to be sessions where knowledge about the center is imparted mainly via interpretation into the client's own language (cf. 2.4.2. on issues related to interpreting). It is important to note here that such a strategy bypasses the lingua franca, or English. While some of the information presented in these sessions is not new to the clients, but has actually been introduced to them in prior ELF situations at the episodic circuit, the sessions are seen by the *ohjaajat* as being key to ensuring that the clients are truly aware of the realities of their situation in accordance with the exigencies of the dispositional and facilitative circuits. The need for these information sessions arises from the fact that ELF is simply not powerful enough to be the language of true power. One view is that upon attending these sessions, clients become part of the reception center community, and so have also inched somewhat closer to adopting the norms of the larger Finnish society. Another view is that shared schemata oblige: the client is suddenly under different cultural expectations, and ignorance is no longer an excuse from the point of view of the *ohjaajat*, who are now able to claim moral power over the clients, and apply that belief in ELF situations.

Whether the *ohjaajat* are explicitly aware of it or not, power imbalances do not bode well for the ideal of the "cooperative co-construction of meanings" which is how ELF encounters are framed in ELF theory (Guido 2012:221). In her research, Guido has found that whether intentionally or not, in interactions at the episodic circuit immigration officials in Italy have tried to impose on English-speaking asylum seekers their own lingua-cultural usages, which are based on the grammar codes and pragmatic behaviors characteristic of ENL, or native English speaker norms. Furthermore, such culture-bound usages and conventions can be "cognitively and linguistically inaccessible, conceptually unavailable […] and often socio-culturally unacceptable" to people of non-western origins (Guido 2012:221). Yet the immigration officials in question could be excused because they are acting on the unconscious assumption that they are correct based on the moral power accorded to them by their position. The language they impose on asylum seekers is that of the dispositional and facilitative circuits, which demand that officials use in official contexts the kind of ELF that is as close to grammatically native English

as possible. While the *ohjaajat* in Finland also possess a sense of moral power, in their interactions with asylum seeker clients they are more prone to converge with them than immigration officials seem to be, at least in Italy. Immigration officials can choose to conduct asylum interviews in English if they are confident in their own and their interviewee's skills. *Ohjaajat* on the other hand cannot rely on interpreters to deal with asylum seekers whose level of English proficiency is low or nonexistent. Their situational awareness is honed by the heterogeneous character of EFL encounters in the reception center.

Figure 5 (*Punavuori reception center*). Asylum seekers must rely on contextual and schematic knowledge to parse some of the messages directed at them.

In her study Guido (2012:221) also found that asylum seekers frequently meet many difficulties in "interpreting discourse behaviors and understanding specialized concepts that are alien to their native schemata." However, in one of her previous works, Guido (2008:298) found that there is another side to communication between immigration officials and asylum seekers, a conclusion that is worth quoting at length:

> [T]he main communicative difficulties in [immigration interview] contexts are due precisely to the use of ELF, since it develops from the non-native speakers' transfer of their native language structures and socio-cultural schemata into the English they speak. Transfer, in fact, allows non-native speakers to appropriate, or *authenticate*, those English semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and specialized-discourse structures that are linguistically and conceptually unavailable to them.

While the use of ENL schemata in ELF communication appears to cause confusion in non-native speakers of English, it seems that a more level playing field is created when ELF communication incorporates aspects of non-native speakers' native languages. In more technical terms, the "situations of contact between different semantic, syntactic and pragmatic codifications lead to more complex processes of iconical patterning, which occurs within the grammar code of the chosen 'lingua franca' — such as ELF," meaning that "operations of 'transfer' from the various L1-codes to the ELF-code become inevitable" (Guido 2008:130). If two non-native speakers imposing their L1 codes on ELF is a more communicatively successful strategy for them than mutually negotiating ENL norms, that means there can be English that is too "good" for the reception center. Yet in the context of giving asylum seeker clients the tools of empowerment, language is not and should not be second to schematic knowledge. Furthermore, there is evidence that due to discrepancies between the education levels and socio-cultural backgrounds of asylum seekers and those helping them, certain forms of language are conceptually unavailable to the former group to such a degree that even "simple" explanations "do not always produce better understanding" when explaining the meaning of such words as "nationality" and "citizenship" with the help of a professional interpreter (Pöllabauer 2004:171).

In an attempt to countervail the effects of cognitive and linguistic inaccessibility as well as conceptual unavailability, the *ohjaajat* employ various linguistic accommodation strategies to make themselves understood by clients. Some of these strategies include repetition and paraphrasing (although as Weyns (2013) found in her research, social workers employing such strategies have still had difficulties establishing mutual understanding). Other strategies are recounted by Seidlhofer (2011:99): "[c]larity [in communication] can be enhanced by giving prominence to important elements, redundancy added or exploited, explicitness […] increased by making patterns more regular, [and] word classes or semantic relations generally can be made more explicit."

An example of maximizing semantic simplicity in communication with clients is heard whenever the *ohjaajat* are talking about money with them: the terms "money paper" (*rahapaperi*, for the longer *vastaanottorahahakemus* or "application for reception money") and "money day" (*rahapäivä*, for *nostopäivä* or "withdrawal date") are current in the everyday speech of the reception center. Though unclear which party was the first to use these simplifications to office jargon, they are nevertheless effective descriptors (or contextual cues) of the ideas they are meant to express. Fascinatingly, on their part clients who come from the Middle East especially are often heard to use the term "salary" (*rātib* in Arabic) to describe the monthly *vastaanottoraha* (*lit.* "reception money"), rather than any other term that could possibly carry negative or "passivizing" connotations, such as "benefit" or "allowance" (which of course are more specialized words in any language). The merits of calling unearned money one's "salary," however, are debatable; nevertheless, it is a word clients seem to use as a term of empowerment.

The above strategies take some of the unfamiliarity out of a situation for a client, and could thus be argued to serve as equalizing factors in clients' encounters with *ohjaajat*. As ELF encounters tend to be "multilingual, multicultural, and multinormative speech events that are shaped by a considerable number of contextual factors" (Mortensen 2013:42), it is in the interest of the *ohjaajat* to use contextual cues to lessen the effects of the power imbalance affecting their dealings with clients, who are more often than not "unaccomplished ELF speakers" (an expression used by Seidlhofer (2004), quoted in Weyns 2013:56).

However, there are two major caveats to using ELF as the primary language with clients. Firstly, the use of center-specific ELF jargon outside the reception center might pose a problem for the asylum seekers. English words like "camp" (used for "reception center") and "money paper" are not exactly terms that are current in Finnish society, and would hardly be understood outside the immediate context of the reception center. In the case of "reception money" (what one applies for with a "money paper"), the Finnish authorities are partly to blame for some of the confusion, since *vastaanottoraha* was known as *toimeentulotuki* before 2011. The latter term is what unemployed Finnish citizens would receive from the government; in order to justify giving less money to asylum seekers, a separate category was created that only applies to those on asylum seeker status. While *vastaanottoraha* is a mouthful, teaching clients corresponding vocabulary in English (such as "allowance") would educate them about the "conceptually

unavailable" aspects of Finnish society and give them better access to networks outside the reception center. Knowing the correct word for a thing or phenomenon empowers by acting as a key to further education and understanding.

The second caveat concerns the use of ELF in various social situations. Weyns (2013) has found that asylum seekers do not always understand that the principal task of the staff of any reception center is to provide information and administrative help to clients at the episodic circuit, with the aim of being of the *most help possible* in spite of several constraints imposed by the dispositional and facilitative circuits. While *ohjaajat* strive to explain the nature of these constraints to the best of their abilities, in the face of complicated issues that often touch upon the "conceptually unavailable," aspects of communication among "unaccomplished ELF speakers" are bound to hit rough waters at some point. Social interactions are complex, and in certain situations strategies such as soothing and hedging might not come to be adequately expressed using simple ELF terms. For example, if there is an ailing client who demands to go to the hospital by taxi, sending them there by bus is the usual standard operating procedure (unless it is a medical emergency and the client is in need of urgent medical attention). However, experience has shown that explaining such a state of affairs in simplified ELF terms is difficult, serves to agitate an already agitated client, and such incomplete explanations may also adversely affect the future relationship between the client and the *ohjaaja*. Moral power is often not enough even if understood to be true by both parties, with conflicts sometimes occurring between *ohjaajat* and their clients over information that has been presented inadequately. Often *ohjaajat* have resorted to telephone interpreting in order to resolve pressing issues and defuse situations upon failure to communicate meaningfully in ELF.

There are also caveats to these caveats. In the case of the first one, it is always preferable for a client to be able to speak Finnish rather than English. If a client does know Finnish, the *ohjaajat* tend to use that language with them. It is also the language that empowers; while knowledge of it is not enough to tip the scales of power in favor of the client, it helps them grasp the realities of the system in Finland. The second caveat concerns the rights of clients who have just arrived in Finland. Having staff on hand who are able to speak the client's language(s) is crucial to the well-being of the latter, since they cannot be expected to know Finnish at such an early stage. Another option is to use interpreters more extensively, although they do not come without their own caveats (cf. 2.4.2.). Considering these aspects, there is an interesting conclusion to draw from them:

though today English is the dominant language of international relations on the level of all circuits of power, this dominance also contains the seeds of a paradox that seems to affect social relations mainly in expanding circle countries. In what I term as the *ELF dominance paradox*, it seems that in certain contexts (or networks) English is not adequate enough to be the language of true power, yet due to its status as *the* international language it is used to maintain power relations for want of a better language. In other words, if one does not use English, one cannot exercise any kind of power, but at the same time English is a woefully inadequate vehicle for exercising power effectively. Reception centers in Finland are a prime example of the paradox in action.

2.4.2. The power and pitfalls of interpretation

Interpretation occupies center stage in all official communications between reception center staff (*ohjaajat*) and reception center clients. As discussed in section 2.3.1., Finnish reception centers are under obligation by law to offer information in the client's L1 language. And as discussed in the previous section, interpretation offers a way of mitigating the power imbalances that exist between the *ohjaajat* and clients that result from inadequate language skills. Interpretation also builds schematic knowledge, which at least partly bridges the gap between an asylum seeker's native culture and that of the host, and which hopefully leads to communicative success in even the most difficult English as a lingua franca (ELF) encounters. Furthermore, interpretation, when done through a professional, allows the *ohjaajat* to express information in a way that is culturally sensitive and the clients to directly engage power structures at the episodic circuit (cf. p. 15).

However, from the point of view of power relations, the benefits of interpretation are not entirely clear cut. One important issue is the question of who is fit to interpret for clients, as many interpreters of shared ethnic backgrounds are usually part of the same small refugee community in a given area, which might lead to privacy and confidentiality issues (McKeary & Newbold 2010:526). Thus some clients will shy away from such interpreters, requesting for an interpreter who does not represent the same ethnic background as they do. In extreme cases clients may even fear that the interpreter is a government collaborator in disguise (Kalin 1986:233). The reception center will always

try to find a suitable interpreter upon request, even though finding one for smaller languages is a challenge in a small country like Finland.

Even when a suitable interpreter has been found, there are issues with the quality of interpreting. It has been found that interpreters might "shorten and paraphrase statements, provide explanations, try to save their own — and if possible, also the other participants' — face and intervene if they deem it necessary" (Pöllabauer 2004:175). Such findings are troubling as interpreters are supposed to function outside any networks of power, going as far as conveying tones of voice and other dispositions (e.g. formality) of the participants so that original power relations can be adequately maintained. In the context of Actor–Network Theory (cf. p. 21), while interpreters are arguably an obligatory passage point (OPP) between actors, they try to temper their effect to the best of their abilities; the ideal interpreter is a living, breathing tool.

The benefits of professional interpretation are many, but in the reception center, outside of structured encounters such as meetings with nurses and social workers, as well as meetings with *ohjaajat* who act as *omaohjaajat* (cf. p. 8), interpretation does not feature heavily in encounters with clients. Due to this, clients will often resort to being interpreted by a non-professional who is either a friend or a relative from outside the center, or then a peer who is also an asylum seeker and who lives either in the same center or another one. Of all the possible modes of interpretation, peer interpretation would be the most problematic with regard to power relations. *Firstly*, peer interpreters are not under any obligation to observe confidentiality in the matters told to them, whereas professional interpreters (and *ohjaajat*) would be. In addition to the power imbalances that already exist between clients and the *ohjaajat*, the revealing of potentially harmful information would create additional power imbalances between individual clients. *Secondly*, peer interpreters cannot be trusted to interpret all that has been said in a satisfactory manner. Some studies have found that non-professional interpreters, such as family and friends, "have been known to unintentionally omit, add, condense or wrongly translate […] terms, potentially leading to misunderstanding[s]" (McKeary & Newbold 2010:531). *Thirdly*, sometimes children interpret for their parents, with role-reversal being a particular cultural concern (ibid.). Although the Helsinki reception center has a "no-go" policy regarding children acting as interpreters for adults, in practice this is not uniformly enforced; children do interpret for their parents depending on the situation. Surprisingly,

while some children have already learned enough Finnish to be able to communicate with the *ohjaajat*, others use the little ELF they have acquired.

In the light of all of these issues, it seems that professional interpreters are still able to best ensure that clients' communicative needs are met, since the use of peer interpretation is a very inadequate tool from the point of view of the clients' rights, and ELF is problematic due to its lack of expressive power. Professional interpreters also guarantee that clients are in direct contact with the episodic circuit of power, or *ohjaajat*: it grants them a direct channel for challenging decisions made at the dispositional and facilitative circuits of power. As the basic communicative resources that clients have acquired in their countries of origin do not generally "prove successful in Western institutional contexts and fail to help them overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers they face" in their dealings with the circuits of power in Finland, interpreters are there to "assume a key role in this asymmetrical power constellation" (Pöllabauer 2004:146), replacing inadequate OPPs (ELF and peer interpreters) with an adequate one.

3. Data and methods

Three questionnaires were prepared for the data collection phase of this study: one in Finnish for the reception staff or *ohjaajat*, and two in Arabic and Russian for the clients. The questionnaires were distributed to the clients of the Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu units of the Helsinki reception center in early March 2017, and the data collection period ran for four weeks. The data collection period for the questionnaires distributed to the *ohjaajat* at the Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu centers ran for two weeks, with the data collection period taking place in late March–early April 2017. A copy of all the questionnaires can be found in Appendix I.

Distributing questionnaires was thought to be the least intrusive way of collecting data, since the information within was to be treated as confidential, and due to the fact that the author of the study had also been an employee at the reception center, the advantages of using a questionnaire over other methods of data collection (such as interviews) were thought to ensure impartiality on all sides. The author could not have hoped to have gathered honest opinions from all participants had he not had the shield of anonymity. Thus the questionnaire made no mention of the author's present or former

position as an employee, but merely introduced him as an MA student at the University of Helsinki, since it was his civilian persona who was conducting the study, and not his work persona. The oath of confidentiality the author had taken at his workplace also acted as a shield: what was divulged by the participants in the questionnaires was not to affect how they were treated by the author while on duty, even if he somehow had become aware of the identity of the person whose questionnaire he had read. In the case of the *ohjaajat*, however, the identity of the author was known by necessity, which might have affected the results.

Clients' questionnaires were put in the pigeonholes of each room where a potential participant was staying according to a list of Russian and Arabic speaking clients obtained from the reception center. Pens were included with each questionnaire in order to ensure that potential participants had a writing instrument at their disposal. A sealed box was left at the reception with instructions to the *ohjaajat* to put all returned questionnaires into it. The procedures were identical in both reception centers.

The questionnaires for the *ohjaajat* were put in the pigeonholes of each *ohjaaja* with a request to return them to an envelope left at the reception.

The author composed the clients' questionnaires first in English and then translated them into Arabic and Russian. Opinions about the English version of the questionnaire were sought from fellow MA students at the University of Helsinki and changes were made accordingly. However, the finalized Russian and Arabic versions were not tested with native speakers of either language. Care was taken to communicate issues such as purpose and consent in simple terms to ensure that clients would understand the nature of the study they were participating in. While the author is confident that the language of the Russian version is very close to L1 norms in the language, he cannot be sure that the Arabic version is entirely without grammatical and stylistic faults. Databases with example sentences such as Context.Reverso.net were consulted to ensure that the Arabic version was as linguistically appropriate as possible. Since Arabic speaking clients were consistent in their answers to all the questions, it can be assumed that the language was for the most part correct. However, the results for the Arabic questionnaires might have been compromised by sociolinguistic realities on the ground: written in *fusha* or the formal written standard of Arabic, less educated clients might have found the language of the questionnaire difficult. The Arabic language exists in a state of diglossia: L1 speakers grow up to speak *'āmiyya*/*lahja* or dialect, but must learn *fusha* in order to read

and write (an analogous situation would be a speaker of Spanish having to learn Latin because Latin is the language of education, literature, and the media). As an added difficulty, *fusha* also differs slightly from one Arabic speaking country to the next. Meanwhile, Russian has a uniform written standard throughout the country and the states of the former Soviet Union, so no communicative problems should have existed.

The author composed the questionnaires for the *ohjaajat* in Finnish. Since the Helsinki reception center only hires staff who are fluent speakers of Finnish (the same cannot be said of all the reception centers in Finland), no communicative problems should have existed.

Russian and Arabic speaking clients were chosen as subjects because they come from the expanding circle of English (as opposed to clients from the Indian subcontinent and sub-Saharan Africa which belong to the outer circle) and because they constitute the two biggest groups of asylum seekers in Finnish reception centers, meaning that there is a somewhat large (but manageable) pool of possible participants for the study.

Finally, a word on the author's possible impact on the results of the study. Having actively worked at the Punavuori reception center as an *ohjaaja* between the years 2009–2016, the author has at one time been part of the closely-knit group of *ohjaajat* under study, which would mean that many members of that group have intimate knowledge of him. To counteract the effects of this, the author made a point not to discuss the theoretical details of the study with any *ohjaajat*. At the time of data collection in the spring of 2017 the author was not actively influencing the communicative environment in the Punavuori center. However, he had been working at the Kaarlenkatu center during the data collection period there. Although he communicates in Russian (and sometimes in Arabic) with the clients, considering that there are already L1 speakers of Russian and Arabic in the ranks of the Kaarlenkatu *ohjaajat*, it is possible that his effects on the results there were minimal. The author would rather consider his experience and deep knowledge of reception center life to be an asset for the study.

What follows is a qualitative analysis of the results using Stewart Clegg's circles of power theory (the theoretical framework established in 2.4. and figure 1).

4. Results and analysis

4.1. The views of the clients

Three separate questionnaires were distributed to the clients and staff at the Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu units of the Helsinki reception center: Arabic and Russian speaking clients were given a questionnaire in their L1 language, and the *ohjaajat* segment of the overall staff of the reception centers were given a questionnaire in Finnish (cf. Appendix II for copies of the questionnaires). Thus two separate questionnaires were in circulation, both aiming *firstly* to gauge the nature of power relations between clients and the *ohjaajat*, and *secondly* to find out what kind of English as a lingua franca (ELF) is used in the reception centers, with the central hypotheses being that, *firstly*, from the clients' point of view a variety of ELF exists that is not seen as useful but rather as a communicative crutch and that they would rather either learn Finnish or converse in their own language, and *secondly*, from the point of view of the *ohjaajat*, while they know that they are supporting a variety of ELF that is not useful to clients, due to reasons of expediency and lack of alternatives they prefer to use it. The clients' questionnaire also aimed to map their views on interpretation, with the hypothesis being that they are not entirely comfortable having to resort to peer interpretation (cf. p. 33) and would rather use the services of professionals if given the option. Furthermore, there are two *ohjaajat* who are L1 speakers of Russian and one who is an L1 speaker of Arabic at the Kaarlenkatu center (whereas no one speaks those languages in the Punavuori center); it was expected that respondents would cite that in their responses as a reason for problem-free communication. Later on in the discussion section we shall see how these issues square in with Clegg's circles of power theory (cf. figure 1), namely in the form of effects of the role of the *ohjaajat* as obligatory passage points (OPPs) in the network of power that exists in the reception centers.

The pool of respondents was comparatively small, involving 83 clients and 30 *ohjaajat*, or 113 people in total. In both centers, the total number of Russian speakers who were given questionnaires was 34, of which 19 (56%) returned their questionnaires, whereas the total number of Arabic speakers was 49, of which 22 (44%) returned theirs. Of the combined 30 *ohjaajat*, 15 (50%) returned their questionnaires. Of the 113 surveyed, a total of 56 (49%) participated.

Of all 41 client respondents, 28 (68%) were men and 11 (27%) women, with 2 respondents (5%) not indicating their gender. The biggest nationalities represented were Iraq (16 respondents or 39%), Russia (14 or 34%), Egypt (2 or 5%), and Uzbekistan (2 or 5%), with 1 respondent each coming from Belarus, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Ukraine, and Yemen. 2 respondents did not indicate their country of origin. There was no major variation in the ages of the participants: 6 or 15% were 18–24, 15 or 36% were 25–34, 7 or 17% were 35–44, 6 or 15% were 45–54, 5 or 12% were over the age of 55, and 2 or 5% did not indicate their age. The overwhelming majority of the client respondents had spent less than three months living in the centers, with only two respondents indicating that they had been staying in their centers for more than a year. The *ohjaajat* were not asked any of the above details; instead, their prior history of English studies was the focus (cf. p. 51).

The clients were also asked about their previous English studies in order to gauge their dependence on peer interpreters and *ohjaajat* (since speakers of English are also likely to be able to bypass any OPPs of a linguistic nature). On the whole, the Russian speakers who responded to the questions about English reported the widest gap in English skills, with 5 people claiming they had never studied English, while 4 had studied the language for more than ten years. 2 had studied for less than two years, and 4 had completed studies that varied in length from five years to eight. Of these Russian respondents, 3 had studied English independently. Interestingly, of the Arabic speakers, only 1 respondent claimed to never have studied English, while 3 had studied it for ten years or more. 2 had studied for less than two years, and 5 had completed studies that varied in length from six years to eight. Of these Arabic respondents, 2 people had studied English independently. Unfortunately, many respondents did not leave answers or left answers that were unclear; while 79% of the Russian respondents gave intelligible answers to these questions, only 50% of Arabic respondents did so. It should be added here that most of those who responded reported finding learning English to be an enjoyable and engaging experience. Two of the Arabic respondents in Kaarlenkatu lamented the fact that they had not been able to learn English properly, one writing:

نعم كانت ممتعة ولكن الدراسة في فلسطين لم تكن بالمعايير الدولية كانت مجرد دروس فقط لم يكن هناك أساليب لدراستها

> Yes, [learning English] was enjoyable but studying in Palestine was not up to international standards, it was just [rote] learning, no [proper] teaching methods were employed

Of all client respondents (41), a combined total of 49% (or 20 respondents) claimed to have some knowledge of English. This means that around half of the clients (51%) would have to rely on peer interpreters and *ohjaajat*, giving both groups much linguistic power over these clients.

To gauge the nature of their dependence on others, clients were asked about situations involving peer interpreters. First they were asked about the frequency of having to rely on a peer interpreter to translate for them: of the Arabic respondents, 3 reported "always," 6 reported "sometimes," 11 reported "never," and 2 respondents did not answer. Meanwhile of the Russian respondents, 5 reported "sometimes," 13 reported "never," and 1 respondent did not answer; curiously, while 5 respondents claimed never to have studied English, none reported "always" needing peer interpretation. While in the case of Kaarlenkatu this is understandable since there are two permanent *ohjaajat* who speak Russian as their L1, in Punavuori there was no one who would have known the language. In the Kaarlenkatu center, two respondents explicitly mentioned the presence of L1 Russian speaking staff as easing communication:

> К нам относятся хорошо. При не обходимости [*sic*] получаю нужную информацию на родном языке.
>
> We are treated well [by the staff]. I receive all necessary information in my native language whenever I need it.

> Бывает не всё можешь объяснить, что хотела... А вообще трудностей мало, так как персонал разговаривает на разных языках!
>
> Sometimes you cannot explain [to staff] all that you wanted… But in general there are few problems [communicating], because the staff speaks different languages!

However, despite this, there is evidence that even in the Kaarlenkatu center clients sometimes rely on peer interpreters to help them. This is understandable, since the two L1 Russian-speaking *ohjaajat* are not always present. One client in the Kaarlenkatu center

said that they would rather wait for an *ohjaaja* who speaks their language to come, because the communicative alternative is hand gestures:

> Жестами, или дождусь человека, который говорит на понятном мне языке.
>
> [*How do you make the staff understand you?*] With the help of gestures, or then I'll wait until there's a person who speaks a language that I understand.

Another client in the same center also reported "trying to speak with Russian-speaking staff" ("стараюсь обращаться к русскоязычным") whenever possible.

An Arabic-speaking client from the Punavuori center reported acting as a peer interpreter for some clients:

> يوجد بعض اللاجئين في المركز، لا يتكلمون الإنجليزي أو الفلندي، ففي بعض الأحيان كنت أترجم لهم.
>
> There are some refugees in the center who do not speak English or Finnish, and in some situations I have interpreted for them.

When asked about the identity of the person interpreting for them, 5 Arabic respondents mentioned that the person was a friend, while 3 others said that it is basically "any person they can get a hold of" ("أبحث عن من يجيد اللغة الانكليزية" and " اي واحد في الجوار يجيد اللغة للتوصل معهم"). Only 1 Russian respondent in the Punavuori center indicated the person was a "stranger" ("посторонний человек"), while another person said it was their "neighbor" ("сосед"). One Russian respondent had asked their Finnish teacher to help them with an issue:

> Пользовалась услугой учителя финского, почему [*sic*] мне надо [было] сменить еду.
>
> I used the services of our Finnish teacher, why [*sic*] I had to change my diet.

The clients were also asked about how they feel about being interpreted for by a peer. They could tick multiple options in the following list; first are the combined results from speakers of Arabic:

9. c) How do you feel about someone else interpreting for you?

“It helps me a lot”	4
“I think there are negative sides”	3
“I can talk about issues freely”	1
“I cannot talk about issues freely”	3
“I trust I'm interpreted correctly”	none
“I'm not sure I'm interpreted correctly”	5
“I would like to be able to talk in my own words”	6
“I can speak enough English to manage by myself”	7

Most of the respondents only ticked two or three options, while 3 ticked almost all that apply. None of the respondents who ticked the last option ticked any of the other options. Interestingly, 4 respondents in the Kaarlenkatu center claimed that they are not sure they are interpreted correctly, while only 1 ticked that option in the Punavuori center. Many respondents (6) expressed a desire to know a foreign language to be able to take care of their things without the help of intermediaries. No respondent indicated trust in peer interpreters. This seems to point in the direction of a general distrust of peer interpreters as OPPs between clients and *ohjaajat*, although clients must still rely on them regardless. As for the Russian clients, their combined results are the following:

9. c) How do you feel about someone else interpreting for you?

“It helps me a lot”	4
“I think there are negative sides”	1
“I can talk about issues freely”	none
“I cannot talk about issues freely”	2
“I trust I'm interpreted correctly”	2
“I'm not sure I'm interpreted correctly”	none
“I would like to be able to talk in my own words”	6
“I can speak enough English to manage by myself”	2

2 Russian respondents expressed a more positive attitude toward peer interpretation, saying they trust that they are interpreted correctly, whereas none of the Arabic speakers were as optimistic. As with speakers of Arabic, comparatively many Russian respondents expressed their wish to know a foreign language to be able to talk in their own words. The respondents who said they cannot speak freely about issues were both, strangely enough, clients at Kaarlenkatu.

The questionnaires also included a list of typical contact situations asking about the kinds of situations in which a peer interpreter was involved and where the respondent had either been in the role of interpreter or one interpreted for. Here are the combined results for both Arabic and Russian speaking clients:

10. In which of the following situations have you used someone else to interpret for you?

"Help explaining health problems"	7
"Questions related to asylum process"	5
"Help finding a place"	7
"Explaining mail"	10
"Help resolving problems/conflicts in the center"	6
"Chatting with the staff"	4

Even though peer interpreters are not linguistically trained interpreters, lack the virtues of impartiality and professionalism, and cannot be held accountable for how they interpret information, they are still made to deal with serious issues. 5 respondents had indicated peer interpreters were used as intermediaries in enquiries about an individual's asylum seeking process, 7 had been involved in situations concerning a person's health, and 6 had dealt with conflicts or other problems in the reception center.

In connection with this, in response to question 14 (how to improve communication), several clients expressed their wish to have a professional interpreter present at the reception:

وجود مترجم عربي بسبب كثره الاجئين العرب في فلنده

The presence of an Arabic interpreter due to the large number of Arab refugees in Finland

لا ملاحظات، كل الأمور ممتازة والمركز يستحق التقدير على جهوده وعمله الإنسانيّ الممتاز!!! ولكن أقترح أن يضعون عامل إستقبال يتقن اللغة العربيّة للذين لا يتكلمون الإنجليزية.

No remarks, all things are great and the center deserves recognition for its efforts and excellent humanitarian work!!! But I would suggest they hire a reception worker who is fluent in Arabic for those who do not speak English.

غير متوفر مترجم عربي صالح

No good interpreter of Arabic is available

Two Russian speaking respondents from Punavuori also echoed these thoughts, with some suggestions going even further than merely hiring an interpreter of flesh and blood:

Я бы поставил, устройство, моментальный перевод, в ресепшн. С набором языка, человек подошел, набрал англ, рус, араб, или др. языки говорит в устройство и оно переводит сотруднику центра и наоборот, речь сотрудника просителем убежища.

I would place a device [capable] of instant translation in the reception. With a selection of languages, a person could come, choose Engl[ish], Rus[sian], Arab[ic], or another language [that is] spoken, on the device and it translates for the staff and vice versa, the speech of staff to the asylum seeker.

Иметь какого-то дежурного переводчика с финского на русский и наоборот, потому что бывает ситуации когда это необходимо. Писать информацию не только на английском и арабском, но и на русском.

> To have an interpreter on duty who interprets from Finnish to Russian and vice versa, because there are situations when that is necessary. To write information not only in English and Arabic, but also Russian.

The second commenter also complains about the signage (cf. Appendix II for examples) and other written materials in the reception center (there are also notice boards in the centers, cf. figure N in Appendix II), and also about the use of English. A second respondent in Punavuori also criticizes the same issues:

> Чтоб был переводчик, чтоб информация предоставлялась не только на арабском английском и финском языке [*sic*] но так ж и на русском.
>
> That there was an interpreter, that information was presented not only in Arabic English and Finnish but also in Russian.

Based on these comments, it seems that some clients are not very excited about having to deal with English even in passive form as a language of signs and notice boards, even though one respondent in Punavuori defends the use of English:

> اللغة الانجليزية لغة تواصل عالمية ويجب على كل شخص تعلمها وخاصة النزلاء في هذا المركز
>
> The English language is a language of international communication and everyone should learn it, especially the clients of this center

Although three Iraqi respondents would like to learn English, others see more value in learning and cultivating Finnish:

> Больше говорить на финском, а не на английском. Ну и чтобы были люди которые понимают русский и могут объяснить на русском.
>
> [The staff should] talk more in Finnish, and not in English. Well, and that there would be people who understand Russian and can explain things in Russian.

Мне легче учить финский, потому что я уже 2 года учила финский язык

It’s easier for me to learn Finnish, because I’ve already studied Finnish for two years

إقترح بأن يكون هناك نوع من الإندماج مع المجتمع الفنلندي حتى يمكن الشخص من التواصل بسهولة مع جميع أفراد المجتمع أن يدعو ويأكدوا على حضور دورات اللغة الفنلندية.

I would suggest that a person’s integration into Finnish society was organized so that they would be able to communicate with ease with all members of society [which could be done] by way of inviting them to participate in Finnish courses.

أتمنى على موظفين الاستقبال أن يشاركوا معنا في دروس تعلم اللغة الفنلندية في قاعات دراسة المركز حيث يفترض حضور واحد على الأقل لغرض المشاركة

I am hoping for the reception workers to join us in the Finnish lessons in the classroom of the center for at least one time for their participation to count

باتعلم [*sic*] اللغة الفلندية لا الانجليزية

[*How would you improve communication?*] By teaching Finnish and not English

Although even among these voices there were some who found Finnish to be somewhat peculiar and difficult:

Недостаточное знание финского, бывает трудно понять разговорный язык, т.к. в школе учат литературному

[*What makes communication with staff difficult?*] An insufficient understanding of Finnish, it’s difficult to understand speech, because in school we are taught the literary language

Финский язык достаточно специфичен, и необычен, в данный момент я использую английский.

The Finnish language is so specific, and unusual, [that] right now I'm using English.

On the whole, the trend among respondents seems to be favoring Finnish over English. If English has a role, it is seen as more of a crutch than a viable alternative to learning Finnish. Rather than using English as a lingua franca language, clients seem to prefer to use their native languages with the *ohjaajat* through interpreters who are preferably professionally trained.

The questionnaire also included a question where respondents were asked to provide examples of the individual English words or phrases ("tokens") they had picked up while at the center. Many Russian and Arabic respondents wrote that they either had not learned anything at all or that they had not learned anything new. Of those who did write that they had learned new tokens, almost all were Arabic speakers, with only one Russian speaker reporting that they had learned a few tokens (which are unrelated to reception center life). Among the tokens that Arabic respondents reported having picked up were "asylum," "asylum seeker" (and its Finnish equivalent "turvapaikanhakija"), "transfer," "interview," and "municipality." Of these tokens "transfer" and "interview" are the most interesting ones, since the former refers to transfers of asylum seeker clients between reception centers (the Helsinki reception center is a transit center after all), while the latter is a word that the *ohjaajat* use to refer to both asylum *hearings* at the Finnish Immigration Service and any meetings with the police at the Pasila police station, which otherwise would be referred to as "kuulustelu" or "interrogation" in Finnish. In addition to these, two answers stood out which are included here as figures:

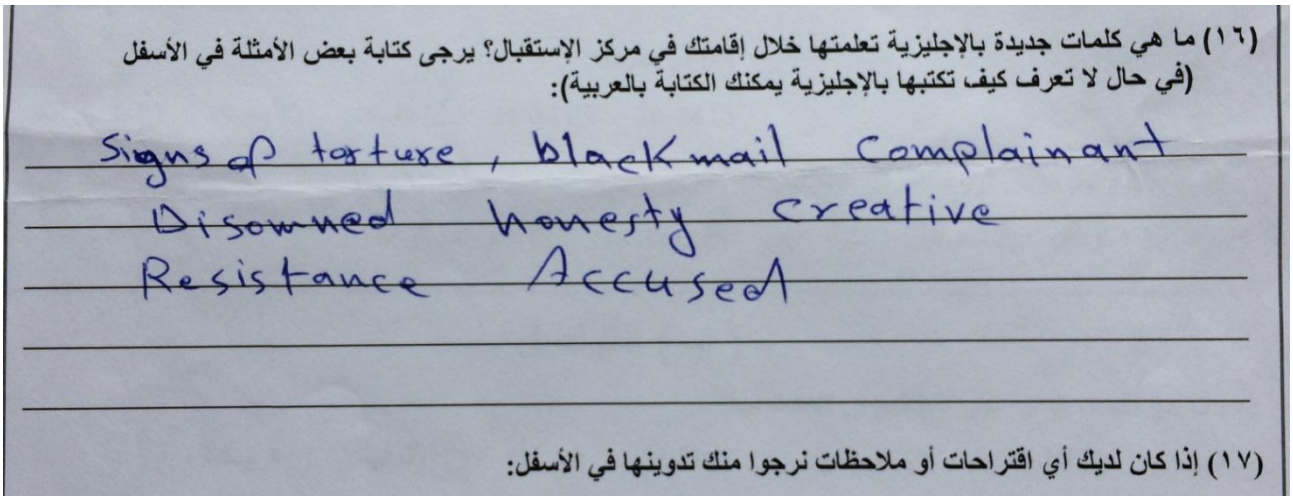


Figure 6. "Signs of torture, blackmail, complainant, Disowned, honesty, creative, Resistance, Accused"

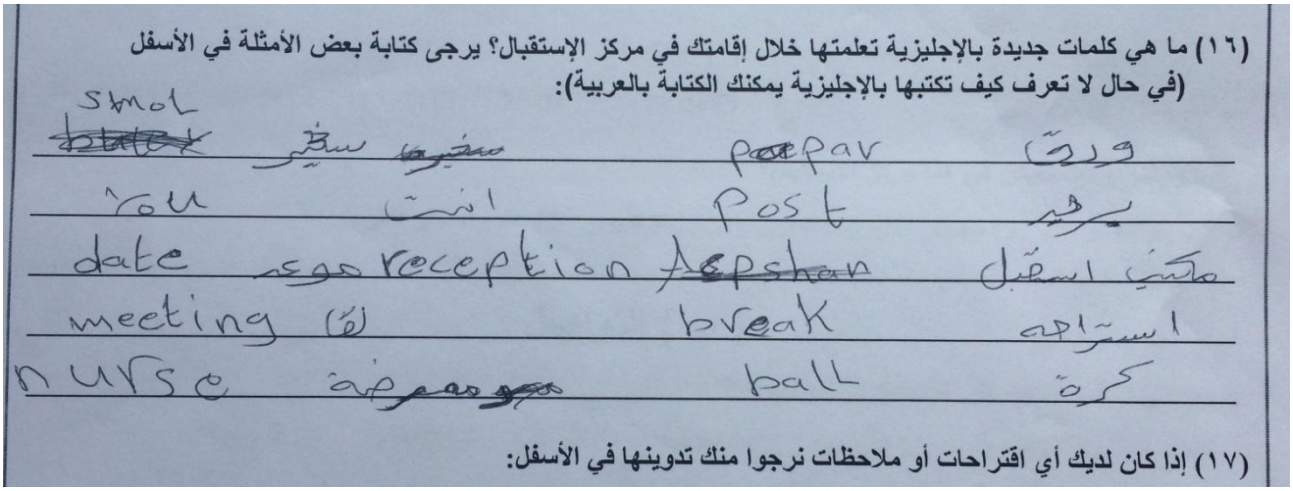


Figure 7. "smol [small], you, date, meeting, nurse, papar, post, reception, break, ball" and Arabic equivalents.

The respondent behind figure 6 displays an advanced knowledge of English. One can get a sense of their life story through the words they have had to learn in English in order to be able to discuss and explain the difficult events of their past life. While this study argues that ELF does not empower for the most part, in the case of this client, knowing such vocabulary in a foreign language means that they are able to tell their story and stand up for their rights in a new country and new culture.

The respondent behind figure 7 has learned many basic vocabulary items during their stay at the reception center, all of which can be traced back to situations in the reception center, or reception center life. The *ohjaajat* give out "post" (mail) at the reception desk, often many such pieces of mail are "meetings with the nurse," for example, for a certain "date." "Balls" are some of the more popular items that clients can borrow from the reception for short periods of time in exchange for their ID cards. These are the kinds of tokens that *ohjaajat* expect most, if not all, clients to pick up, not only to facilitate communication, but also to give them the vocabulary to express their most basic needs.

Finally, the respondents were asked about aspects of their relationship with the *ohjaajat*. The vast majority of respondents reported that they found the *ohjaajat* to be congenial. Some also assessed their behavior to be that of "professionals." However, there were also respondents who criticized the *ohjaajat*:

موظفون جيدون ولكن يحتاجون الى المزيد من المعلومات عن البلدان القادمين منها

The staff is nice but they need to learn more about the countries asylum seekers come from

يجب على الموظفين دراسة بعض عادات وتقاليد النزلاء في مركز الاستقبال.

The staff should learn more about the customs and traditions of their clients in the reception center.

بأعتقادي ان التواصل مع الموظفين سهل خاصة لمن يتكلم اللغة الانجليزية، وهناك بعض الصعوبة في فهم بعض العادات والتقاليد والحالة النفسية التي يمر بها طالب اللجوء

I think communicating with the staff is easy especially for a person who speaks English, [but the staff] has some difficulties understanding the customs and traditions and the mental state of asylum seekers

الحالة النفسية للنزلاء هو [*sic*] انعكاس لوضعهم الحالي او الماضي وما يمروا به هم وعوائلهم. اتمنى ان يركزون على هذا الجانب ومحاولة تفهم بعض تصرفات اللاجئين خاصة وانهم يمرون بظروف صعبة في بلادهم وفي فنلندا في ظل القرارات المجحفة بحق اللاجئين.

The mental state of the clients is a reflection of their present or past conditions and what they and their families have gone through. I hope they [the staff] will consider these aspects and take pains to understand some of the actions of the refugees in the difficult circumstances they have faced in their home countries, and [are facing] in Finland in the light of unjust decisions against refugees.

١- يكون موظف من اصول فنلندا
/ ٢- عميل المطعم يكون من اصول فنلندا يفضل تقديم الطعام بطريقة الفنلندية
/ ٣- لا ارغب ان يكون موظف مثل الشرطية

1. The staff is ethnically Finnish / 2. The kitchen staff is ethnically Finnish [and] prefer to serve Finnish food / 3. I don't want the staff to act like the police

It seems many of the Arabic speaking respondents take issue with perceived cultural insensitivities, although this may just be the effect of poorly communicated power realities, or mainly the failure to explain why the dispositional and facilitative circuits of power favor one order over another. Concerning the issue raised in the last quotation, Finnish food is served because the dispositional circuit dictates that this is Finland and that in the name of consistency it is Finnish food that has to be served to the multicultural and multiethnic group that is asylum seekers, while at the facilitative circuit it is easier and more cost-effective for kitchen staff to procure Finnish food (which is sent in from large commercial kitchens). However, in this client's mind the *ohjaajat* and kitchen staff, who serve as OPPs at the episodic circuit, are to blame for the type of food served. In reality neither have the ability to influence policy decisions that come from above, even though they *do* have the power to inform the actors responsible for policy decisions at the dispositional circuit. Whether they see such action as necessary is another issue. As for the last comment about the *ohjaajat* acting "like the police," as OPPs it is the task of *ohjaajat* to enforce policies that come from the dispositional circuit. While it is difficult

to say which issues the client had in mind, there are several things that come to mind: for example, due to regulations relating to hygiene and other issues, clients are not allowed to take hot food and certain other items (such as ceramic cups) to their rooms from the center's dining hall. This is a frequent source of conflict between clients and the *ohjaajat*, who might appear to be "policing" the premises. Often clients simply have not known about all the rules, although there have been cases where clients have knowingly taken objects such as cups and utensils from the dining hall. While adequate communication can deal with the former, the *ohjaajat* must still "police" the dining hall to catch the latter kind of clients whose "borrowing" of the center's property will become costly in the long run. One important role for the *ohjaajat* is to explain why power realities work in such and such a way; for this, language is of the utmost importance.

Since we have established that communication is of such importance, it was asked in the questionnaire what the clients thought about the quality of communication. One question asked about whether the *ohjaajat* speak clearly: the Arabic respondents were equally divided over "yes" (9) and "no" (9), with 4 not giving their opinion. The Russian respondents leaned more toward "yes" (11), with 6 saying "no" and only 2 not giving an opinion. Another question was about whether the staff have insisted on using English in communication even with clients who do not understand it; the combined results for both groups indicate that that has happened in the case of 39% of respondents (16), while 10 indicated that had not happened, 4 could not say whether such a situation had occurred in their case, 5 had no opinion, and 6 did not give an answer to the question. There is thus some evidence that at least some clients feel that the *ohjaajat* impose the English language on them; in the next section we will explore the views of the *ohjaajat* on these kinds of communicative matters.

In all, clients from Kaarlenkatu did not report higher levels of overall satisfaction with the communicative environment in their center, as might have been expected since they have better access to L1 speakers of Russian and Arabic. However, in their comments they were not as nearly as critical of their communicative environment as clients from Punavuori were. In fact, the most negative comments invariably came from Punavuori, especially with regard to perceived cultural insensitivities. Russian speaking clients from Kaarlenkatu were most satisfied with the communicative environment in their center, while Arabic speaking clients from Punavuori were most critical of theirs.

While there were three other questions in the questionnaires dealing with certain aspects of communication, those results have not been included here since they do not add anything of significance to what has already been touched upon in this section.

4.2. The views of the *ohjaajat*

The *ohjaajat* were given a questionnaire that concentrated on two issues: *firstly*, what are their overall perceptions about the use of English as a means of communication in the center especially with regard to the alternative, which is Finnish, and *secondly*, what kind of English do they use with the clients; for this they were asked to write down specific tokens as examples.

As background information, the *ohjaajat* were asked to assess the level of their spoken and written skills in English. The scale used was the very Finnish four-point grading scale of *välttävä* (below average), *tyydyttävä* (average), *hyvä* (good), and *erinomainen* (excellent). Of the 15 *ohjaajat* who took the time to respond to the questionnaire, 5 *ohjaajat* reported having average spoken English skills, 5 reported having good skills, 4 reported excellent skills, and 1 did not answer. As for their written skills, 1 *ohjaaja* reported having skills that are below average, 4 assessed theirs as average, 5 reported having good skills, and 4 claimed to have excellent skills, while again 1 *ohjaaja* did not answer.

A complaint some *ohjaajat* have voiced relatively frequently is the supposed deterioration of their English skills after having started work at the reception center, specifically as an effect of the language environment in which they work. The questionnaire garnered mixed results regarding this: 7 *ohjaajat* believe their skills have indeed deteriorated, while 7 believe they have not, and 1 *ohjaaja* could not say. The reasons that the *ohjaajat* gave for this had mainly to do with the level of the clients' English:

> *Työssä joutuu käyttämään hyvin yksinkertaista englantia mikä heijastuu myös työn ulkopuolella käymiini englanninkielisiin keskusteluihin.*
>
> You must use very simplified English in your work which is reflected in the quality of the English conversations I have had outside of the workplace.

Käytetty kieli on äärimmäisen yksinkertaistettua ja itsekin miettii helpointa selitystä jollekin asialle, kuten vaikka opastamalla asiakasta löytämään jokin palvelu kaupungilta.

The language used has been simplified to an extreme degree and you find yourself thinking about the easiest explanation for a thing, for example, how to direct a client to find a certain service in the city.

Lauserakenteet yksinkertaistuneet, lausuminen heikentynyt ja monimutkaisempien sanojen käyttö on vähentynyt.

Sentence structures have become simplified, pronunciation has worsened and [I am] using less of the more difficult words.

Asiakkaat puhuvat usein itse auttavasti englantia, joten yhteisymmärryksen vuoksi on alkanut laskemaan oman puhe-englannin tasoa, joka tuntuu haitanneen kielen ylläpitoa. Sama tapahtunut myös kirjoitetussa englannissa.

Clients often speak passable English, so for the sake of mutual comprehension I've begun to lower the standards of my spoken English, which seems to have had a negative effect on my overall skills. The same has happened with my written English.

One *ohjaaja* also wrote the following in English: "The majority of our customers do not speak English fluently. You need to use very simple language in order to communicate with them (e.g. perfect grammar should not be used)." Based on these answers, the *ohjaajat* seem to be very pragmatic about their communicative environment, adapting to the needs of the clients. They were also asked about whether or not they would copy a client's speech (cf. the Communication Accommodation Theory on p. 24), for example by using a word the client uses to describe a certain thing: the overwhelming majority or 11 *ohjaajat* said they do copy the clients' speech, while only 3 said they do not. 1 *ohjaaja* ticked the "I cannot say" option, but wrote to specify somewhat cryptically that "with the client in question I will, generally I won't" ("Kyseisen asiakkaan kanssa kyllä, yleisesti en").

When asking about what kind of English the *ohjaajat* had specifically encountered in their interactions with the clients, the questionnaire asked them to consider the issue from two points of view: the first question asked them to list examples of the kind of English they have frequently heard clients use, and the second question asked them to list the kinds of words and phrases they knew they themselves would use often. Some of the frequently heard tokens from clients include the following:

chicken = kitchen! camp, kettle, ...arkipäivän sanoja, joilla on jokin yhteys päivittäiseen elämään VOK:ssa. Yleensä keskustelu käydään yksinkertaisin lausein ja kielioppia yksinkertaistetaan mahdollisimman paljon.

chicken = kitchen! camp [reception center], kettle [electric kettle], …the kinds of everyday words that are related to daily life in the reception center. Usually we converse in simple sentences and grammar is simplified as much as possible.

Yes ja Okay, vaikka selvästikään eivät ymmärrä, mistä on kyse

Yes and Okay, even though they clearly don't understand what the talk is about

Tietyiltä alueilta tulleilla omat sanat esim. päivittäisille tavaroille/asioille (clinex, nylon..)

People coming from certain areas have their own words for daily things (clinex [*sic*; toilet paper], nylon [plastic trash bag]..)

"I want to see nurse, social, doctor etc." Money paper, money office, card bus/bus card. "I want to check my post"

Moneypaper, salary, small ball, money office

"problem", me", "big problem", "no eat", "post", "money", "money paper", "no like", "no good", "clothe"

give me money paper / salary paper; where is bank; baby car

Camp instead of reception centre; Salary instead of reception allowance

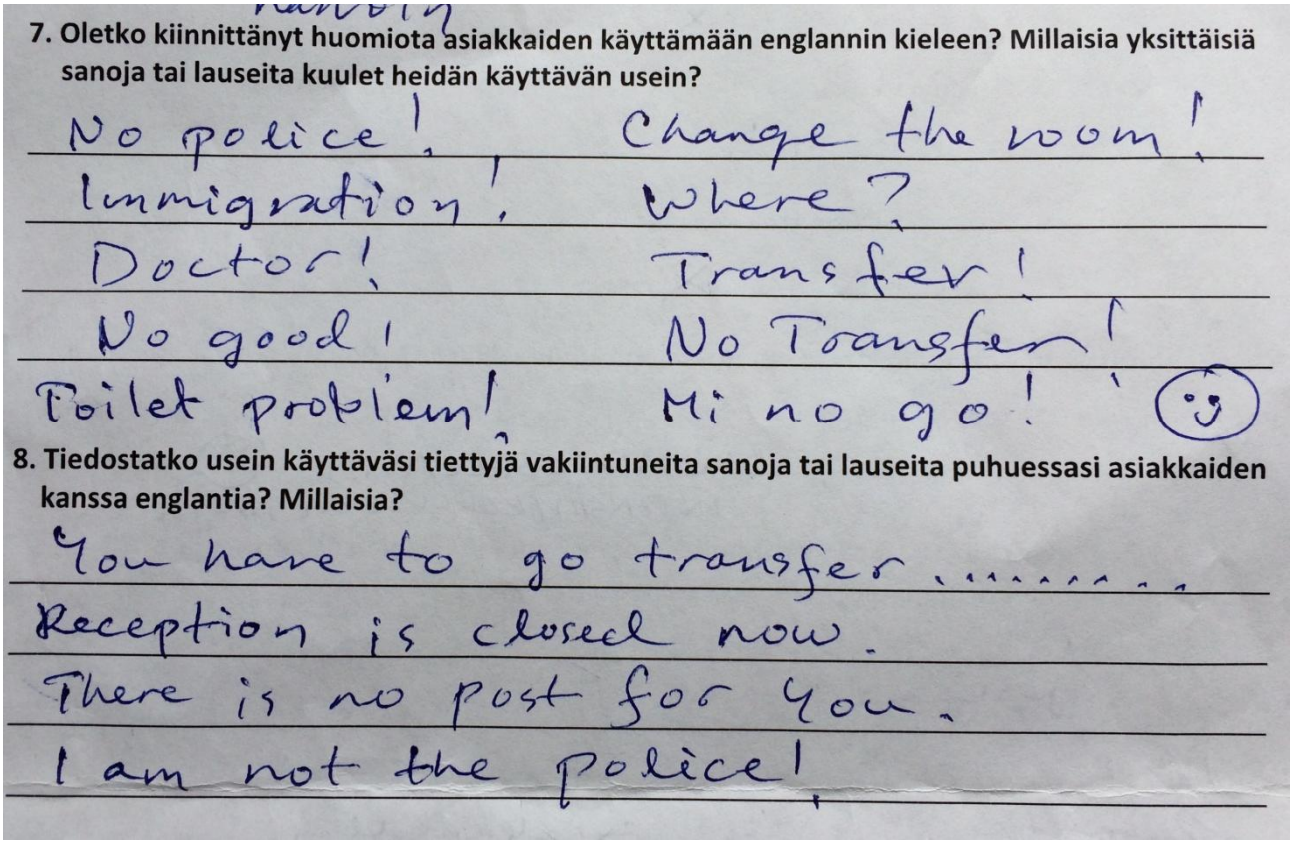


Figure 8. Frequently heard tokens from clients (7. above) and the individual *ohjaaja* (8. below).

As can be seen from these tokens, the level of everyday English in the center seems to be fairly low. Certain tokens are words that have become fairly common in the center, such as "money paper" for *vastaanottorahahakemus* (*lit*. "application for reception money"), and "money office" and "bank," which both describe the *yleisökassa* (*lit*. "public cash desk") where clients must go to collect their monthly allowance. Social workers are also commonly referred to as "social," and there seems to be a clear distinction between "nurses" (the healthcare professionals available in the reception center) and "doctors." "Post" is preferred over "mail," which could be said to be good, as the latter word is not universal, unlike the former. The word "problem" seems to be a fairly common way of signaling that things are not in order, although parsing the meaning of it and the words

tacked on to it can be a challenge if one does not know the context of reception center life; for example, in figure 8 the token "toilet problem" refers to something in the toilet being out of order (which is not necessarily the toilet itself, but could be the sink as well), and not to anything else, such as health problems. In the absence of specific vocabulary, generalized expressions become signals to the OPPs that something needs to be done about a certain issue. Similarly, instead of describing the nature of a medical problem in clear terms (such as listing symptoms), clients can repeat the word "doctor" or the phrase "I want to see doctor" to draw the attention of the *ohjaaja*, even though it is always the nurse of the reception center who will do a checkup of the client first. Interestingly, one *ohjaaja* confessed that they do use the word "doctor" when referring to a nurse:

> *Kyllä, yksinkertaisia lauseita, huonoa englantia "You go police" "You talk doctor" (Doctor, vaikka tarkoitan hoitajaa)*
>
> Yes, [I tend to use] simple sentences, bad English "You go police" "You talk doctor" (Doctor, although I'm referring to the nurse)

The *ohjaajat* seem to be highly aware of the incorrect nature of the English they are using with clients, but justify it with pragmatic reasons: clients cannot be expected to understand anything more than simplified vocabulary and grammar:

> *Käytän samoja sanoja mitä asiakkaat käyttävät, vaikka se olisi kieliopin vastaista*
>
> I use the same words that the clients use, even if they are ungrammatical

> *Kielestä tulee helposti hyvin yksinkertaista ja olettamus siitä että näin kommunikaatio sujuu helpommin on vahva.*
>
> Language easily becomes very simple and the assumption that this is how things are more easily communicated is strong.

> *Kyllä tiedostan. Samoja mitä kuulee heidän useimmiten käyttävän. Sitä menee helposti asiakkaan englannin tasolle (ei vain huono asiakaan koska eihän ole järkeä puhua kieltä siten ettei toinen ymmärrä.)*

Yes, I am aware [of using nonstandard English]. The same [words] you usually hear them use. It's easy to go to the level of the client's English (not bad either because it doesn't make any sense to talk in such a way that the other person doesn't understand.)

Kyllä, yksinkertaista Tarzan-englantia! Keskustelun tarkoituksena on usein saada henkilö ymmärtämään jokin asia, siksi fokus on enemän [sic] *päämäärässä kuin laadussa.*

Yes, simple Tarzan English! The purpose of a conversation is to get the other person to understand something, which is why the focus is more on the goal rather than quality.

When asked about any specific tokens that the *ohjaajat* use to reach their communicative goals, the following examples were given:

"Everything ok?", "check the reception", "money paper", "immigration = Maahanmuuttovirasto, "police" = poliisiasema, "time for nurse/social" = ajanvarauspyyntö hoitajalle/sos. tt:lle, "you need translate?" = tarvitsetko tulkkia?

"Everything ok?", "check the reception", "money paper", "immigration = the Finnish Immigration Service, "police" = police station, "time for nurse/social" = a request for an appointment with the nurse/social worker, "you need translate?" = do you need an interpreter?

"Turvapaikkapuhuttelu" on "immigration" hehe

"Asylum hearing" is "immigration" hee hee

Kellon ajat [sic] on usein merkattu 24-tuntista kelloa käyttäen ja merkkaan ne itsekin tapaamisiin niin. Enkä usko sanajärjestyksen noudattavan SPOTPA sääntöä. Esim. Go bank tomorrow; tomorrow nurse second floor

> Times [for appointments] are often written using the 24 hour clock and I also write them that way. And I don't think my word order follows the SPOTPA rule [of word order in English: subject, predicate, object, manner, place, time]. E.g. Go bank tomorrow; tomorrow nurse second floor

What these quotations reveal is that there is also no uniform way of using English with clients. Confusingly, "immigration" can either refer to an asylum hearing at the Finnish Immigration Service or the Finnish Immigration Service itself. This begs the question of how sensible it is to use such ELF expressions. The *ohjaajat* themselves would refer to the Finnish Immigration Service succinctly as *migri*, so would it not benefit the clients to teach them that word as well? If conversation with certain clients really is at the level of "tomorrow nurse second floor," would it not benefit the clients if the same idea was expressed in simple Finnish as *huomenna hoitaja toinen kerros*? Rather than ask "you need translate," an *ohjaaja* could teach the Finnish word for "interpreter," which is *tulkki*, or then teach the correct English word, which is "interpreter." All of the function words that the clients eventually pick up in English ("come," "go," "problem," etc.) are equally simple in Finnish: *tule*, *mene*, *ongelma*. Furthermore, why use "post" when *posti* is the actual Finnish word?

In the questionnaire the *ohjaajat* were also asked about their opinions regarding the use (or lack of use) of Finnish in the reception center. When asked if they would prefer to use Finnish rather than English with clients, 10 answered "no," 3 could not state their opinion, and only 2 ticked "yes." However, when asked in the next question whether in their opinion English was used too often as the language of communication in the reception center, 8 answered "yes," 4 answered "no," and 3 could not state their opinion. The questions seem to have polarized the opinions of the *ohjaajat*: while some see the advantages of using Finnish because it would benefit at least certain clients in the long run, others take a more pragmatic stance and say English is more suited to be the language of a transit center (cf. p. 11) where existence is also transient. First are comments by the *ohjaajat* who think English is used too often in the reception center:

> *On parempi käyttää enemmän suomea, jotta asiakkaat oppisivat sitä, mutta suomea käyttäessä on usein enemmän kommunikaatiovaikeuksia kuin englantia käyttäessä*

It is better to use more Finnish so that clients would learn it, but when Finnish is used there are usually more difficulties in communication than when using English

Yritän käyttää suomea aina, kun se vain on mahdollista, jotta asiakkaille tarttuisi myös vokissa asioidessaan suomen kieltä. Jos suomi ei riitä, voi aukkoja täydentää muilla kielillä mahdollisuuksien mukaan

I try to use Finnish always when possible so that clients would also learn Finnish when running errands in the reception center. If Finnish is not enough, other languages can be used to fill in the gaps when possible

Voisi puhua yksinkertaista suomea jo tässä vaiheessa ... Suomenkieltä [sic] *voisi tuoda hyvin yksinkertaisesti asiakkaiden arkeen ja mahdollisuudet kotoutumiseen voisi alkaa jo nykyistä aiemmin.*

We could speak in simple Finnish already in this stage … The Finnish language could be brought into the daily lives of clients in very simple terms and their integration process could start earlier than is the case these days.

Suomen kieltä käytettäessä myös asiakkaalla olisi tietty vastuu oman kielitaitonsa kehittämisessä. Keskustelun voisi aloittaa helpolla suomella, yksittäisiä sanoja, yksinkertaisia muutaman yleisen sanan lauseita!

When using Finnish the client, too, would have to assume a certain responsibility for the development of their own language skills. Easy Finnish could be used to start conversations, single words, simple sentences of a few common words!

Suomea voisi käyttää enemmän jotta suomen oppiminen lähtisi jo vokista liikkeelle. Tosin, tämä saattaa johtaa tarpeettomiin väärinymmärryksiin, jolloin puollan englanninkielen [sic] *käyttöä, sillä monet asiakkaat osaavat ainakin muutaman sanan.*

Finnish could be used more so that [clients] would learn Finnish already in the reception center. However, this might lead to needless misunderstandings, in which case I think it is better to use English, since many clients already know at least a few words of it.

The *ohjaajat* who were unsure of their opinion had the following to say:

> *Englannilla saa asiat varmemmin hoidettua, sillä asiakkaamme ovat niin uusia, että eivät ole vielä suomen kieleen perehtyneet. Jos asiakas puhuu suomea käytän sitä. Etenkin lasten kanssa tulee puhuttua suomea ja vain englantia, jos heidän äidinkieli on englanti.*
>
> With English you can get things done with more certainty, because our clients are so new that they haven't had the time to familiarize themselves with Finnish yet. If a client speaks Finnish I'll use it. Especially with children I usually talk Finnish and only English, if their mother tongue is English.

> *Vastasin eos, koska käytän englantia, jos asiakas osaa englantia ja kyse tärkeästä asiasta. Jos kyse pienestä asiasta (roskapussin hakemisesta, kartasta tms.) käytän myös suomen kieltä.*
>
> I answered not sure, because I use English if the client knows English and the issue at hand is important. If it's a small matter (getting a trash bag, map, etc.) I'll also use Finnish.

The *ohjaajat* who thought English was not used too often in the center had the following to say:

> *Suomeksi viesti ei mene perille*
>
> In Finnish you simply can't get the point across

> *Asiakkaat ovat transit-keskuksessa niin lyhyen aikaa, että eivät opi suomea sen aikana.*
>
> The clients are in a transit center for such a short period that they cannot learn Finnish in that time.

> *Suurin osa asiakkaista ei puhu/ymmärrä suomea laisinkaan. Väkisin suomea puhuminen ei edistäisi hoidettavaa asiaa.*

> Most clients do not speak/understand Finnish at all. Forcing Finnish on them would not make handling their affairs easier.

> *Koska kyseessä on ensivaiheen vastaanotto, asiakkailla ei ole suomenkielen alkeetkaan hallussa. Vain harvat dublinit yms. kiertäjät osaavat joskus suomea. Englannilla menee asiat yleensä ymmärrettävästi eteenpäin, tai tulkin välityksellä asiakkaan omalla kielellä.*

> Because [in this center] we are dealing with the first stage of a client's asylum process, they do not even know the basics of Finnish. Only a few dublins* and other itinerant clients sometimes know Finnish. We can usually get things done pretty well through English, or in the client's own language through an interpreter.

Based on these comments, it seems that the *ohjaajat* are aware of their role as an important language link between clients and wider society, and also acknowledge that they could use more Finnish because of its long-term benefits for their clients, yet still choose to use English because it carries the most immediate communicative benefit for *them*. While certain clients do already possess some knowledge of English and are served by staff with comparatively good English language skills, the level of English that is cultivated in the reception center does not seem to support the growth of clients' communicative competencies in English, as evidenced by the dearth of examples given by English speaking clients in their questionnaires of words they had learned in the center; many had only written that they had not learned anything new at all during their stay. Furthermore, if the use of such simplified English is reportedly detrimental to the language skills of the *ohjaajat*, then it could be argued that its use might also hurt the skills of English speaking clients, who would be picking up overly simplified and outright erroneous vocabulary from the *ohjaajat* (e.g. the double meaning of "immigration," or "doctor" when referring to a nurse). Although it could also be argued that some of these

*Here the *ohjaaja* refers to the asylum seekers who have been returned to Finland from a third country in accordance with the Dublin Regulation of European Union law that states that the country where an asylum seeker applies for asylum first is also the only country where their case will be heard. If an asylum seeker seeks asylum in a third country, they will be deported back to the country of their first application.

simplifications (e.g. “money paper” and “money office”) are useful conceptual simplifications of more difficult Finnish terms, there is no reason why these difficult terms could not be simplified with the help of correct English terms, such as “application” for “money paper.” Knowing correct vocabulary would eventually benefit clients even *outside* the world of the reception center. It is an unfortunate fact that currently clients are only taught a code that does not have real applications outside the few square meters that make up the reception desk of a reception center.

5. Discussion

Although common sense would dictate that using English is always beneficial in a foreign country due to its status as the international language of communication, or *lingua franca*, there seem to be systems and networks in which English as a lingua franca (ELF) becomes a liability. In the case of Finnish reception centers, ELF has proven to be little more than a communicative crutch when dealing with the asylum seeker clients housed there, and its ability to create schematic knowledge, or knowledge that allows one to understand the social realities of one’s surroundings, is compromised due to the highly simplified and even erroneous nature of ELF vocabulary used among clients and the reception desk staff, or *ohjaajat*. Although the *ohjaajat* seem to be highly aware of the impact of their language use, they still cultivate certain linguistic habits when using ELF due to their belief that it is in the clients’ best interests to do so.

The *ohjaajat* seem to use ELF by necessity: as the two reception centers where they are working at, Punavuori and Kaarlenkatu, are transit centers, they receive the kind of clients who are mostly fresh arrivals to Finland. While eventually some of these clients will not be allowed to stay in Finland, many will, and herein lies the basic conflict of interest that concerns power relations in the center: even though half of the clients surveyed for this study have claimed no knowledge of English and have expressed a desire to learn Finnish (or to use an interpreter who is familiar with their native cultures), the *ohjaajat* have stated that they would rather use ELF in all communications concerning “important matters” and that they would consign Finnish to the role of a language of routine exchanges. The *ohjaajat* have the full power to do this, since in this network of actors they act as obligatory passage points or OPPs: clients are dependent on their

expertise, and in order to appeal to the higher echelons of the network of which they are part that control the dispositional and facilitative circuits of power, they must communicate all matters to the *ohjaajat* at the episodic circuit, or the level where interactions that realize power relations take place according to Stewart Clegg's circuits of power theory (cf. figure 9 below).

To gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the network of power in the reception centers, we need to expand the conceptual tools given to us by the circuits of power theory. Unlike in the network described by Callon in his study of scallop fishermen where there was only one OPP holding the network together (cf. p. 18), here multiple OPPs seem to be involved in the network, and there also seems to be a hierarchical relationship between them. The *ohjaajat* are the *primary* OPP (OPP1), or the OPP that provides direct access to the dispositional and facilitative circuits, while language functions as a *secondary* OPP (OPP2), or an additional OPP that a whole group of actors must have recourse to due to certain limiting factors that prevent them from directly dealing with the OPP1. An OPP2 can and should never function independently in a network, unlike an OPP1.

In addition to this, there is a qualitative distinction that must be made between OPPs: some OPPs empower (*empowering obligatory passage point* or EOPP), while others suppress (*suppressing obligatory passage point* or SOPP). This distinction becomes important when looking at the identity of the OPP2 in our network, or "language." There are two ways of understanding how language functions as an OPP2: as an EOPP, a certain foreign language should be considered to be an obligatory passage point for a group of actors as a whole due to the fact that not all actors in the network possess knowledge of it; thus, knowledge of the language empowers since it gives an actor direct access to the OPP1, yet it still is an obligatory passage point since it is the only language of communication with the OPP1 and actors must "pass" it in order to be able to influence the dispositional and facilitative circuits of power. An example of this would be using Arabic with an *ohjaaja* (OPP1) who does not possess Arabic skills: communication is not possible, and so ELF and Finnish become EOPPs since knowing them gives direct access to the OPP1.

As for the SOPPs, interpreters should be understood as being another dimension of language, because ideally an interpreter is only a tool or channel that actors use for communication. However, in actuality they are also actors in the network, since studies

have shown that they act independently of other actors, influencing the information content that is transmitted between them. Thus their use *suppresses* actors: even though they are supposed to act as direct intermediaries between an actor and an OPP1, they are not reliable since actors cannot be sure that their speech has been interpreted correctly. One could argue that interpreters do empower since at least a professionally trained interpreter offers interpretation between languages that is equivalent to conversing at an L1 level for all of the actors who are being interpreted. This is true, although it is not always the case in the reception center, where peer interpretation is more common in daily exchanges, and professional interpretation is primarily reserved for meetings and events. In addition, many of the studies that have criticized the quality of interpreting have concentrated on the faults of *professional* interpreters, showing that even they are liable to distort and omit ideas in communication. Ideally, a fully empowered actor is both able to take care of their own affairs independently and independently understand the nature of the network of which they are part; direct knowledge of the language used by the OPP1 is the only conceivable way that guarantees such independence, since direct access to the OPP1 is also direct access to the dispositional and facilitative circuits of power. In the long run interpreting is also only a crutch: direct knowledge of a language stays with actors for their entire lives, while due to the costs involved and their special nature interpreters cannot be called to handle every communicative instance in actors' daily lives; hence the argument that the use of interpreters suppresses more than empowers.

Communication in the Finnish reception center has three aspects: the use of ELF, the use of Finnish, and interpretation between actors' L1 languages. As was previously discussed, these aspects are not given equal weight by the *ohjaajat*: interpretation is only used in routine information sessions, meetings, or emergencies; Finnish is not used unless clients insist; and ELF is the default. While it is a fact that reception centers will always need ELF in order to function properly, and so Finnish should by no means ever become the sole language of communication, its use should be emphasized much more, especially since that is what many of the clients themselves would want and expect.

In addition, there are demonstrable problems with the quality of the ELF used in the reception centers. Should ELF retain its dominant status in the future due to its status as a necessary communicative crutch, these issues are something the *ohjaajat* must address for the sake of transparency: each *ohjaaja* seems to have their own terms that may or may not correspond to the terms' official English translations, and to prevent

alienating the clients, the clients should be introduced to correct terms that will doubtlessly aid and empower them. Interpretation also serves to alienate because of its role as an OPP2, although it, too, is a necessary crutch: despite its flaws, it promotes the development of schematic knowledge for the clients that also serves to empower them in the early stages of their asylum seeking process. Here "alienation" is any mechanism that makes clients complacent: why learn Finnish when interpretation or at least ELF are available?

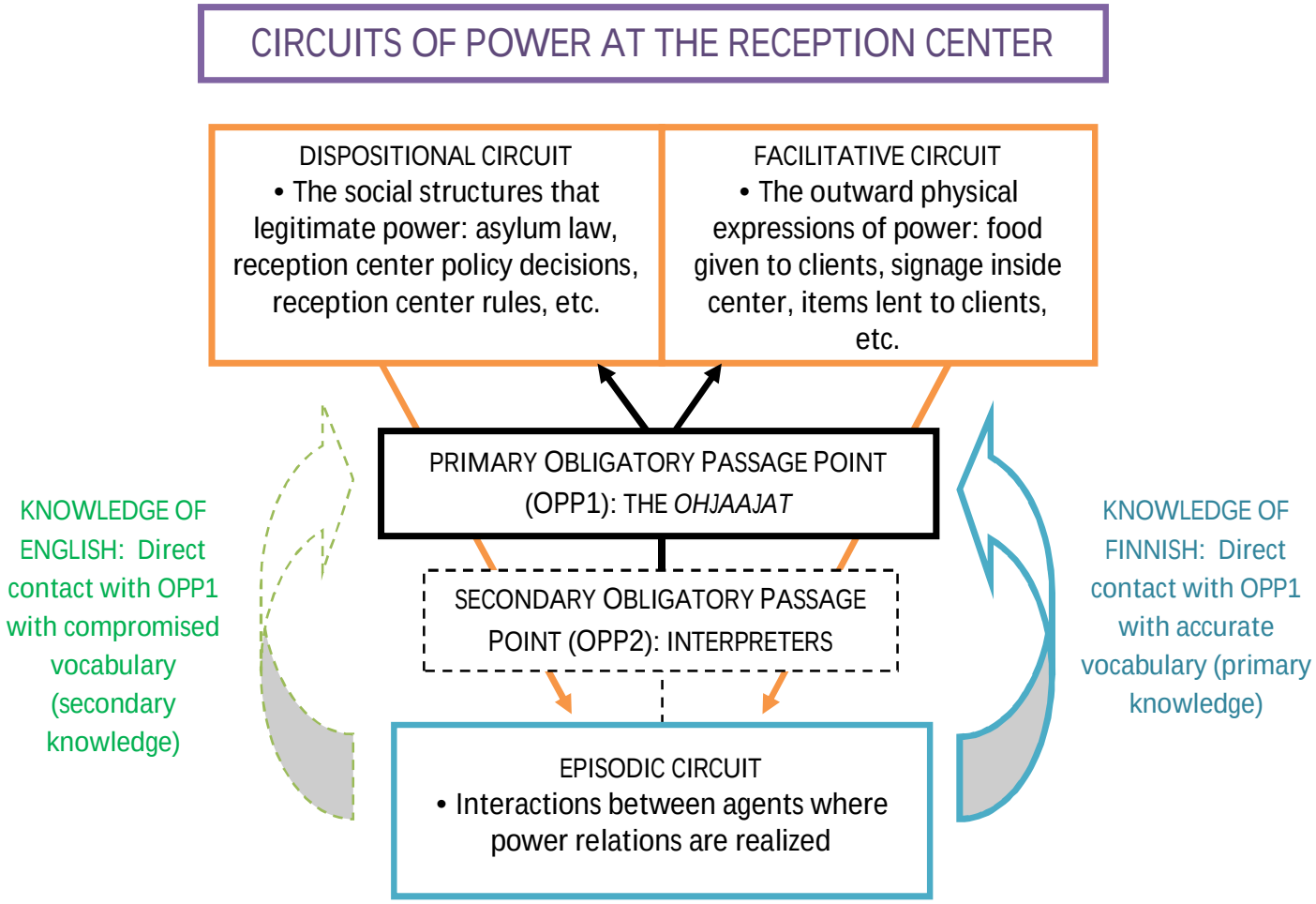


Figure 9. Circuits of power theory adapted for the reception center environment. Note that only human actors are labeled as OPPs.

In the light of some of the points raised in this discussion, ELF can be classified as an SOPP as well, since it does not actually promote primary knowledge, or direct knowledge about the identity of a thing (e.g. knowing a thing by its untranslated or correct name, e.g. *vastaanottorahahakemus* versus "money paper"). Instead, what is given to

many clients is (flawed) secondary knowledge. For example, *ajanvarauspyyntö hoitajalle* (*lit.* "request for an appointment with the nurse") simply becomes "time for nurse" (and not even "appointment with nurse"), and the real nature of the act remains unknown to the client, who is never communicated the idea of merely *requesting* an appointment. The nurse might never give them the time of day, which happens relatively often as many ailments can be treated with painkillers, which is what the nurse will write in her instructions for self-care on the same *ajanvarauspyyntö* paper that is returned to the client (to their dismay since they believed they would meet the nurse; I have witnessed that many times during my years of work). Thus in some cases ELF can suppress due to its overly simplified nature, but whether or not it does so is up to the actions of the OPP1 or *ohjaajat*.

The reasons why ELF serves to suppress more than empower in certain contexts bring us to the *ELF dominance paradox*, which was mentioned in the final paragraph of section 2.4.1. on pp. 31–32, and here our new conceptual tools allow for a more technical definition: in any network in which ELF gains the role of OPP for either all actors or a certain segment, in the absence of any other suitable language of direct communication the communicative needs of none of those actors are met if ELF is not used, yet due to the fact that ELF is not the language of primary knowledge, the communicative needs of the actors are only partially met when ELF is used, and thus as long as ELF is used, it is an SOPP language that stands in the way of actors acquiring primary knowledge in the alternative EOPP language. In less technical terms, English is not adequate enough to be the language of true power, yet due to its dominant status it is used to maintain power relations for want of a better language: Finnish would be the optimal language of power relations, but circumstances prevent its widespread use. If one does not use English, one cannot exercise any kind of power, but at the same time English is an inadequate tool for exercising power effectively.

If we are to improve the communicative environment in the Finnish reception center, we must concentrate on effective and lasting ways of imparting primary knowledge while also ensuring that communication is based on realistic assumptions, in other words we must strive to strike a balance between justified use of both ELF and Finnish in daily interactions in the reception center, while keeping in mind that Finnish should be preferred whenever it is the language of the kind of schematic knowledge that can empower; an empowered client will gain some sense of purpose and inclusion as they

become familiarized with the vocabulary they need in order to be able to become a functioning member of Finnish society.

6. Conclusions

It has been established that the level of English as a lingua (ELF) in at least two Finnish reception centers is low. Even though its use does seem to meet some of the needs of the asylum seeker clients housed in those centers, it is not an adequate tool of communication. If clients keep using the kind of pidgin-type ELF that is cultivated in the center, they are in danger of learning to look at things though a fractured prism: the word "immigration" can refer to either the Finnish Immigration Service or an asylum hearing, the monthly allowance of an asylum seeker is called a "salary," etc. To remedy this situation, it is up to the reception desk staff or *ohjaajat* to address these issues. The *ohjaajat* could decide to use certain words in a uniform fashion and with proper translations to ensure that clients are aware of the true nature of things. The *ohjaajat* could and certainly should use their moral power to explain why, for example, it is not appropriate to call unearned money coming from the government one's "salary."

While the use of simplified ELF terms is unavoidable due to the "unaccomplished" nature of many of the English speaking clients in the centers, one still wonders if it would serve them better to use simple Finnish in daily interactions. If non-English speaking clients are able to learn simple ELF words (e.g. "toilet problem"), they could be taught to express the same in Finnish, possibly with even a little more grammar thrown into the mix.

In addition to using more Finnish, we should also find other ways of circumventing the use of ELF in Finnish reception centers. Interpreters are widely used in these centers for certain needs, such as in information sessions where clients are introduced to life in the reception center and are taught about what kind of services they should expect to receive. Some clients would like to use the services of an interpreter even at the reception, although it is unclear whether this would be good policy. Currently clients make use of peer interpreters whenever they do not share a language with the staff, but neither are the skills of peer interpreters comparable to those of trained professionals, nor are they ethically bound to any principles due to the unofficial nature of their interpreting, which

makes them a highly unreliable tool. Professional interpreters on the other hand are a costly policy that the Finnish state might not be ready to underwrite.

One solution is hiring more "language-aware" staff to work in the centers, not only as *ohjaajat*, but also in other roles, such as in the kitchen. These staff members would be able to communicate in both Finnish and one of the foreign languages spoken in the center, which is the case of the three *ohjaajat* in the Kaarlenkatu center, two of whom are native (or L1) speakers of Russian, with the third one speaking L1 Arabic; incidentally, even though clients from Kaarlenkatu did not report higher levels of overall satisfaction with the communicative environment in their center, they were not as nearly as critical of their communicative environment as clients from Punavuori were. In order to avoid overburdening such language-aware *ohjaajat*, it would be preferable to hire more than one of their kind for each language. In the case of more exotic languages these people would invariably be of non-Finnish extraction, which may or may not become a liability. *Ohjaajat* sharing a background with clients might be put under more pressure as clients would treat them more as their countrymen rather than as impartial civil servants of the State of Finland, and so it could be argued that it is more advantageous to hire ethnically Finnish *ohjaajat*. This is also the problem with many interpreters who might even know the clients they are serving, as even in the 2010s immigrant communities tend to be small in Finland. Furthermore, if interpreters are placed in the reception as permanent staff members, they run the risk of assuming some of the responsibilities of the *ohjaajat*, which should be avoided since they do not necessarily possess the required skills, training, or character of an *ohjaaja*. If we are to hire more language-aware staff in the reception center, it should be *ohjaajat* instead of interpreters. However, it should be borne in mind that the *ohjaajat* are only partially responsible for any positive long-term change: the actors at the level of the *facilitative and dispositional circuits of power* are instrumental in effecting change by introducing new and relevant policies. Whatever the eventual solution is (or is not), hiring the kind of staff who are able to transcend and translate with impartiality the cultural differences at the facilitative and dispositional circuits of power is advisable.

Finally, to support asylum seeker clients, more Finnish courses should be offered than currently is the case and attendance in them either made obligatory or tied to certain rewards, even if not all of the asylum seekers attending those courses would be staying in Finland. At present there are not as many places on Finnish courses as there are clients seeking to enter them, and this situation must change if Finland as a nation desires to

better integrate asylum seekers and avoid creating "immigrant ghettoes," as has happened in countries like Sweden and Germany, where there are people who have spent decades in the country but who have *never* learned the local language, at least to a functional level (Li 2016). Schematic knowledge can only go so far; appropriate language skills are essential for the long-term well-being of asylum seekers staying in Finland, which is why all asylum seekers regardless of future status should be taught the basics of Finnish.

However, as Schuster (2003:242) writes, "research has shown that, in the long run, migrants, *whatever their initial status*, become net contributors to the receiving society" (emphasis added). Thus any fears about the consequences of failing to learn a language in the initial stages of an asylum seeker's stay should not be exaggerated, although further study on the benefits of early language acquisition among asylum seekers in Finland should also be conducted, especially since the number of asylum seekers and other types of migrants settling in Finland is expected to grow by around 240,000 people between the years 2016–2026 (Heino 2015:143). If Finland embraces the values of an open society and welcomes these new arrivals instead of segregating or vilifying them, there is hope of proper integration. All citizens of Finland with the ability to affect the dispositional and facilitative circuits of power are responsible for working toward that goal: for even if we accept that man is an island, his shores are still open to the world, and no armada can hope to stand the inevitable winds of change.

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Appendix I: The questionnaires used for the study

التواصل واللغة الإنجليزية في مركز الإستقبال

إن الهدف من هذا الاستبيان هو فهم طبيعة التواصل بين موظفين مراكز إستقبال فنلندية وطلاب لجوء ينزلون فيها. خالق هذا الاستبيان هو طالب في جامعة هلسنكي يتمنى أن ستكون نتائج الاستبيان مفيدة لتحسين خدمات مراكز إستقبال. سينشر النتائج في رسالته لدرجة الماجستير خلال عام ٢٠١٧م. نقدر مشاركتك بشدة في هذا الاستبيان!

ملاحظات هامة قبل الإجابة

- ستكون إجاباتك **سرية ومجهولة هوية**. بإمكانك التعبير عن رأيك بصراحة!
- هذا الاستبيان هو **غير متعلق بطلبك للجوء**.
- رجاء كتابة **بخط واضح**.
- في حال **لا تريد أن تشارك** في البحث لا يجب عليك أن تعيد هذا الاستبيان إلى الإستقبال.

(أ) البيانات الشخصية

(١) ما هي جنسيتك؟

☐ سوريا ☐ العراق ☐ اليمن ☐ ليبيا ☐ بدون جنسية ☐ بلد آخر: _____

(٢) ما هو جنسك؟

☐ ذكر ☐ أنثى

(٣) كم عمرك؟

☐ 18–24 ☐ 25–34 ☐ 35–44 ☐ 45–54 ☐ 55 أو أكثر

(٤) منذ متى وأنت تعيش في هذا مركز الإستقبال؟

☐ شهر واحد أو أقل ☐ شهرين ☐ 3–6 شهور ☐ 6–12 شهور ☐ عام واحد أو أكثر

(ب) التواصل

(٥) ما هي اللغات التالية التي تستطيع أن تتحدث بها؟

☐ الفنلندية ☐ الانجليزية ☐ الفرنسية ☐ الايطالية ☐ اليونانية ☐ الألمانية ☐ الروسية

(٦) ما هي اللغات التي تستخدمها لتواصل مع موظفين مركز إستقبال؟

☐ الفنلندية ☐ الانجليزية ☐ العربية ☐ الفرنسية ☐ الألمانية ☐ أخرى: _____

(٧) أ- هل من السهل التواصل مع موظفين؟

☐ هو من السهل ☐ ليسه من السهل ولكن ليسه من الصعب ☐ هو من الصعب

ب- لماذا هو من السهل؟ لماذا هو من الصعب؟ أخبرنا عن تجاربك:

_____

_____

_____

_____

(٨) أ- هل يفهمون الموظفون دائماً ما تريد أن تقولهم؟

☐ يفهمونني دائماً ☐ يفهمونني في معظم الحالات ☐ هناك مشاكل فهم

ب- كيف تجعل موظفاً يفهمك؟ أخبرنا عن تجاربك:

_____

_____

_____

_____

(٩) أ- هل تعتمد على شخص آخر يترجم محادثتك مع الموظفين؟

☐ نعم، غالباً ☐ نعم، أحياناً ☐ لا، أبداً

ب- من هو؟ (يرجى وضع علامة في جميع الخانات المنطبقة)

☐ صديقي ☐ قريبي ☐ مترجم محترف ☐ آخر: _____

ج- كيف تشعر عندما الآخرون يترجمون محادثتك؟ (يرجى وضع علامة في جميع الخانات المنطبقة)

☐ هذا يساعدني كثيراً
☐ أعتقد أن هناك جوانب سلبية
☐ أشعر أن استطيع التحدث عن مشاكل شخصية بصراحة
☐ لا أشعر أن استطيع التحدث عن مشاكل شخصية بصراحة
☐ أثق بأن الترجمة صحيحة
☐ لست متأكدا أن الترجمة صحيحة
☐ اردت أن استطيع التواصل بنفسي

☐ أستطيع أن أتكلم الإنجليزية بما فيه الكفاية لكي أفهمها جيداً

(١٠) في أي من الحالات التالية تستخدم شخصا آخر ليترجم محادثتك مع الموظفين في الإستقبال؟ هل أنت كنت تترجم للآخرين؟ (يرجى وضع علامة في جميع الخانات المنطبقة)

☐ شرح مسائل صحية ☐ في حالة أخرى:
☐ مساعدة في مسائل متعلقة بطلب للجوء
☐ مساعدة في إيجاد مكان في هلسينكي (مثلاً مكتب المحامي أو المستشفى) _____
☐ شرح البريد
☐ مساعدة في حل مشاكل حياه أو صراع في مركز الإستقبال _____
☐ دردشة مع الموظفين _____

(١١) هل أنت موافق(ة) على أن يتكلمون الموظفون بشكل واضح.

☐ نعم، أنا أفهم بسرعة ما يقولونني ☐ لا، أحياناً من الصعب فهمه ☐ ليس لديّ رأي في هذا

(١٢) كيف يعاملونك بالإستقبال؟ بطريقة ودية أم حيادية أم حتى سيئة؟ أخبرنا عن تجاربك:

_____

(١٣) هل يتكلمون الموظفون معك بالإنجليزية رغم أنك لا تستطيع أن تتحدث بها؟

☐ نعم ☐ لا ☐ لا أدري ☐ ليس لديّ رأي في هذا

(١٤) كيف أردت أن تحسّن طبيعة التواصل في مركز الإستقبال؟ الأفكار كلها جيدة!

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(١٥) أ- هل درست الإنجليزية من قبل؟

☐ درستها في المدرسة حوالي _____

☐ درستها بنفسي حوالي _____

☐ لا درستها أبداً

ب- كيف تعلمتها إذا درستها بنفسك؟ وكيف كانت الدراسة إذا درستها في المدرسة؟ ممتعة أم لا؟ لماذا؟

_____

_____

(١٦) ما هي كلمات جديدة بالإجليزية تعلمتها خلال إقامتك في مركز الإستقبال؟ يرجى كتابة بعض الأمثلة في الأسفل (في حال لا تعرف كيف تكتبها بالإجليزية يمكنك الكتابة بالعربية):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(١٧) إذا كان لديك أي اقتراحات أو ملاحظات نرجوا منك تدوينها في الأسفل:

_____

_____

_____

بعد الإجابة

- **يرجى إعادة هذا الاستبيان إلى صندوق الإجابة الذي في الإستقبال. رجاء طي الأوراق قبل إعادتها.**
- **إعادة الاستبيان تعني الموافقة على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.**

شكراً جزيلاً على مشاركتك!

КОММУНИКАЦИЯ И АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК В ПРИЁМНОМ ЦЕНТРЕ

Цель данной анкеты — узнать, как можно улучшить коммуникацию между просителями убежища и персоналом приёмного центра. Автор анкеты является студентом в Хельсинкском университете, где он изучает социолингвистику (т.е. изучение роли языка в социальной среде). Полученные результаты будут использованы в магистерской диссертации, с помощью которой предполагается улучшение обстоятельств жизни в форме рекомендаций, предлагаемых руководству приёмного центра.

Прежде заполнения анкеты, обратите внимание на следующее:

- Все ответы носят **анонимный** и **конфиденциальный** характер. Выскажите Свои идеи и мнения!
- Данная анкета никаким образом **не связана с Вашим ходатайством о предоставлении убежища**.
- Пожалуйста, **пишите чётко и ясно**.
- Если Вы **не хотите принять участие** в исследовании, можно просто оставить анкету себе.

А. Данные участника

1. **Гражданство**

☐ Россия ☐ Украина ☐ Беларусь ☐ Грузия ☐ Казахстан Другое: _____

2. **Пол**

☐ Мужчина ☐ Женщина

3. **Возраст**

☐ 18–24 ☐ 25–34 ☐ 35–44 ☐ 45–54 ☐ 55 или больше

4. **Сколько времени Вы живёте в приёмном центре**?

☐ Меньше чем 1 месяц ☐ 1–3 месяца ☐ 3–6 месяцев ☐ 6–12 месяцев ☐ 1 год или больше

Б. Коммуникация

5. **Какие из следующих языков Вы знаете хоть на базовом уровне**?

☐ Финский ☐ Английский ☐ Французский ☐ Немецкий ☐ Итальянский ☐ Шведский

6. **Какие из следующих языков Вы используете при общении с персоналом**?

☐ Русский ☐ Финский ☐ Английский ☐ Французский ☐ Шведский Другой: _____

7. а) **Легко или трудно общаться с персоналом**?

☐ Это легко ☐ Ни легко, ни трудно ☐ Есть трудности

б) **Почему можно сказать**, **что это легко/это трудно**? **Расскажите**, **пожалуйста**, **о Вашем опыте общения с персоналом**:

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. а) **Понимает ли персонал всегда то**, **что Вы хотите им сказать**?

☐ Всегда понимают ☐ Понимают в большинстве случаев ☐ Есть трудности понимания

б) **Если Вас не понимают**, **то как Вы добьётесь понимания персонала**?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. а) **Переводит ли кто-то Вашу речь персоналу**, **когда Вы говорите с ними**?

☐ Довольно часто ☐ Иногда ☐ Нет, никогда

б) **Кто этот человек**? (**Поставьте галочку во всех нужных квадратиках**.)

☐ Друг ☐ Родственник ☐ Профессиональный переводчик Другой: _____

в) **Если кто-то переводит Вашу речь**, **что Вы думаете об этом**? (**Поставьте галочку во всех нужных квадратиках**.)

☐ Это очень помогает мне
☐ Есть и отрицательные стороны
☐ Я могу откровенно говорить о личных проблемах
☐ Я **не** могу откровенно говорить о личных проблемах
☐ Хотелось бы уметь говорить непосредственно, своими словами
☐ Я думаю, что правильно переводят мою речь
☐ Я не уверен(а), что правильно переводят мою речь

☐ Я сам себе переводчик — знаю достаточно английский!

10. **Пользовались ли Вы когда-нибудь переводчиком во время общения с персоналом в приёмной**? **А если Вы знаете английский** (**или финский**), **в каких случаях другие люди требовали Вашей помощи**? **(Поставьте галочку во всех нужных квадратиках**.)

☐ Объяснение о проблемах со здоровьем
☐ Помощь в вопросах о процедуре получения убежища
☐ Помощь в вопросах о том, как найти какое-то место
☐ Объяснение о полученной почте
☐ Помощь при жизненных проблемах в приёмном центре
☐ Беседа с персоналом

☐ Другие ситуации (опишите их):

_____

_____

_____

11. **Согласны ли Вы или нет**: **персонал умеет говорить ясно и понятно**.

☐ Да, я понимаю их слова быстро ☐ Нет, мне иногда трудно понять ☐ У меня нет мнения

12. **Как персонал обычно относится к Вам**, **когда Вы общаетесь с ними**? **Дружелюбно**, **нейтрально**, **даже плохо**..?

_____

13. **Говорит ли персонал Вам по-английски**, **даже если Вы не понимаете этот язык**?

☐ Да ☐ Нет ☐ Я не могу сказать ☐ У меня нет мнения

14. **Как вы улучшили бы коммуникацию с персоналом**?

15. а) **Учили ли Вы когда-нибудь английский**?

☐ Я учил(а) английский в школе примерно _____ год(а)/лет
☐ Я учил(а) английский самостоятельно примерно _____ год(а)/лет
☐ Я никогда не учил(а) английский

б) **Если Вы учили его самостоятельно**, **то как**? **А если в школе**, **то понравилось ли это Вам**?

16. **Выучили ли Вы какие-нибудь новые слова по-английски в течение проживания здесь в приёмном центре**? **Напишите**, **пожалуйста**, **несколько примеров** (**Вы можете использовать кириллицу**, **если Вы не уверены**, **как слово или выражение пишется по-английски**):

17. **Есть ли у Вас ещё какие-нибудь замечания по коммуникации в приёмном центре**?

Что дальше?

- Верните, пожалуйста, заполненную анкету обратно в приёмную, где есть ящик для анкет.
- Подавая эту анкету, Вы тем самым даёте согласие на то, что участвуете в исследовании.

Спасибо Вам большое!

COMMUNICATION AND ENGLISH IN THE RECEPTION CENTER

The purpose of this questionnaire is to look for ways to improve communication between asylum seekers and reception center staff. The creator of this questionnaire is a student at the University of Helsinki and he will publish the results in a Master's thesis in 2017. Share your ideas and experiences so that we can create a better reception center!

Important points to know before answering

- All answers are treated as **anonymous** and **confidential**. Feel free to speak your mind.
- The questionnaire is **unrelated to your asylum process**.
- Please write in **clear handwriting**.
- Do not return this questionnaire if you decide not to take part in the study.

[NOTE: VARIANTS IN THE RUSSIAN VERSION OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE ARE GIVEN IN ITALICS]

A. Background information

1. Nationality

☐ Syria/*Russia* ☐ Iraq/*Ukraine* ☐ Yemen/*Belarus* ☐ Libya/*Georgia* ☐ No nationality/*Kazakhstan*
☐ Other: _____

2. Sex

☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Age

☐ 18–24 ☐ 25–34 ☐ 35–44 ☐ 45–54 ☐ 55 and above

4. How long have you been living at the reception center?

☐ Less than one month ☐ 1–3 months ☐ 3–6 months ☐ 6–12 months ☐ Over 1 year

B. Communication

5. Do you know any of the following languages?

☐ Finnish ☐ English ☐ French ☐ Italian ☐ Greek ☐ German ☐ Russian/*Swedish*

6. Do you use any of these languages to communicate with reception center staff?

☐ Finnish/*Russian* ☐ English/*Finnish* ☐ Arabic/*English* ☐ French ☐ German/*Swedish*
☐ Other: _____

7. a) Is it easy to communicate with staff?

☐ It is easy ☐ It is neither easy nor difficult ☐ It is difficult

b) Why is it easy or difficult? Tell us about your experiences:

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. a) Does the staff understand you easily?

☐ They always understand me ☐ They usually understand me ☐ There are problems understanding

b) How do you make the staff understand you? Tell us about your experiences:

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. a) Do you rely on someone who knows English to communicate with staff for you?

☐ Yes, often ☐ Yes, sometimes ☐ No, never

b) Who is that person?

☐ A friend ☐ A relative ☐ A professional interpreter ☐ Other: _____

c) How do you feel about someone else interpreting for you? (You can tick more than one box.)

☐ It helps me a lot
☐ I think there are negative sides
☐ I can talk about issues freely
☐ I cannot talk about issues freely
☐ I trust I'm interpreted correctly
☐ I'm not sure I'm interpreted correctly
☐ I would like to be able to talk in my own words
☐ I can speak enough English to manage by myself

10. When do you use someone as an interpreter? Have you interpreted for someone in any of the following situations? (You can tick more than one box.)

☐ Help explaining health concerns
☐ Questions about the asylum process
☐ Help finding a place
☐ Explaining mail
☐ Help resolving problems/conflicts in the center
☐ Chatting with the staff
☐ Other situations, please specify below:
_____
_____
_____

11. Does the staff communicate things clearly?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No opinion or don't know

12. How would you describe the staff's general disposition?

_____

13. Does the staff speak English to you even when you do not understand it?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐ No opinion

14. How would you improve communication between asylum seekers and staff?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. a) Have you studied English before, at school for example?

☐ I have studied English at school for around _____ year(s)
☐ I have never studied English
☐ I have studied English by myself

b) How did you learn English if you have studied it by yourself?

_____

_____

16. Have you learned any new English words or expressions at the reception center? Please give as many examples as you can (you can spell the words in the Arabic alphabet/*Cyrillic script*).

_____

_____

_____

17. Do you have anything to say about something that was not asked here? Please tell us!

_____

_____

_____

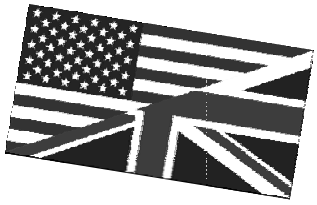
_____

_____

After answering

- Please return this paper to the collection box that is located next to the reception.
- By submitting this questionnaire to the collection box, you agree to take part in the study.

Thank you very much!



ENGLANTI VASTAANOTTOKESKUKSESSA

1. a) Millä tasolla arvioisit osaavasi puhua englantia?

☐ Välttävä ☐ Tyydyttävä ☐ Hyvä ☐ Erinomainen

b) *Jos tunnet CEFR-asteikon*, rengasta englannin kielen taitotasosi seuraavista:

A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2

2. Millä tasolla arvioisit osaavasi kirjoittaa englantia?

☐ Välttävä ☐ Tyydyttävä ☐ Hyvä ☐ Erinomainen

3. Oletko suorittanut englannin kielen opintoja peruskoulun jälkeen? (Voit merkitä useamman)

☐ Lukiossa ☐ Ammattikoulussa ☐ Yliopistossa ☐ Ammattikorkeakoulussa

☐ Itseopiskeluna Muualla, missä: _____

4. a) Oletko samaa mieltä seuraavan väittämän kanssa: englannin kielen osaamiseni on huonontunut aloitettuani työt vastaanottokeskuksessa.

☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei ☐ En osaa sanoa

b) Jos koet osaamisesi huonontuneen vastaanottokeskuksessa, mistä syistä luulisit sen johtuvan?

_____

_____

_____

5. a) Oletko samaa mieltä seuraavan väittämän kanssa: käytän mieluummin suomea asiakkaiden kanssa kuin englantia.

☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei ☐ En osaa sanoa

b) Oletko samaa mieltä seuraavan väittämän kanssa: vastaanottokeskuksessa puhutaan liian usein vain englantia asiakkaille.

☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei ☐ En osaa sanoa

c) Miksi käyttäisit suomea mieluummin kuin englantia? Tai miksi et suosisi vain suomea?

_____

_____

_____

Vielä muutama kysymys kääntöpuolella!

6. Oletko samaa mieltä seuraavan väittämän kanssa: jos kuulen asiakkaan käyttävän jotain englanninkielistä ilmausta palvelutilanteessa, alan käyttämään sitä itsekin riippumatta siitä, onko se hyvää englantia vai ei. Kunhan kommunikaatio toimii.

☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei ☐ En osaa sanoa

7. Oletko kiinnittänyt huomiota asiakkaiden käyttämään englannin kieleen? Millaisia yksittäisiä sanoja tai lauseita kuulet heidän käyttävän usein?

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Tiedostatko usein käyttäväsi tiettyjä vakiintuneita sanoja tai lauseita puhuessasi asiakkaiden kanssa englantia? Millaisia?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Tiedostatko käyttäväsi vastaanottokeskuksessa tiettyjä englannin kielen sanoja tai lauseita, jotka voisi mieltää englannin kielen kielinormien vastaisiksi? Tällaisia ovat esimerkiksi yksinkertaistukset teknisestä terminologiasta tai yleiseen keskuksen kielenkäyttöön päätyneet, mutta vastaanottokeskuskontekstin ulkopuolella huonosti ymmärretyt, sanat ja sanonnat (esimerkiksi ”money paper” sanalle ”vastaanottorahahakemus”).

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thanks a heap! ☺

THE FINNISH QUESTIONNAIRE: ENGLISH AT THE RECEPTION CENTER

1. a) What is the level of your spoken English?

☐ Below average ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

b) If you are familiar with the CEFR scale, please indicate the level of your English skills:

A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2

2. What is the level of your written English?

☐ Below average ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

3. Have you studied English after comprehensive school? (You can tick multiple boxes)

☐ High school ☐ Vocational school ☐ University ☐ University of applied sciences
☐ Self-study Elsewhere _____

4. a) Do you agree with the following statement: my English skills have deteriorated since starting work at the reception center.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Cannot say

b) If you feel that your skills have deteriorated, why do you think that is?

5. a) Do you agree with the following statement: I'd rather use English with clients than Finnish.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Cannot say

b) Do you agree with the following statement: English is used too often at the reception center.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Cannot say

c) Why would you rather use English than Finnish? Or why would you not prefer just Finnish?

6. Do you agree with the following statement: if I hear a client use a certain English expression in a situation, I will start using the same expression regardless of whether or not it is good English, as long as I am able to communicate things well.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Cannot say

7. Have you taken notice of any particular words or expressions that clients use when they speak English? What kinds of words or expressions do you hear them use often?

8. Are you aware of using certain words or expressions when you are talking with clients in English? What kinds of words and expressions?

9. Are you aware of using certain words or expressions in English when you are talking with clients that you know would go against language norms in English? Examples of these include simplifications of technical terminology, and the kinds of words that are used commonly inside the reception center but are poorly understood outside of it (such as "money paper" for "vastaanottorahahakemus").

Thanks a heap! ☺

Appendix II: Signs from the reception centers

Signs act as a daily reminder to reception center clients about how powerless they are. While some signs are translated into the most commonly spoken languages in the center, as can be seen, this is not a uniformly enforced policy. To be able to decipher some of the information, a fairly advanced knowledge of English is required. In this appendix there is a collection of signs mostly from the Punavuori center; signs from the Kaarlenkatu center are indicated separately.

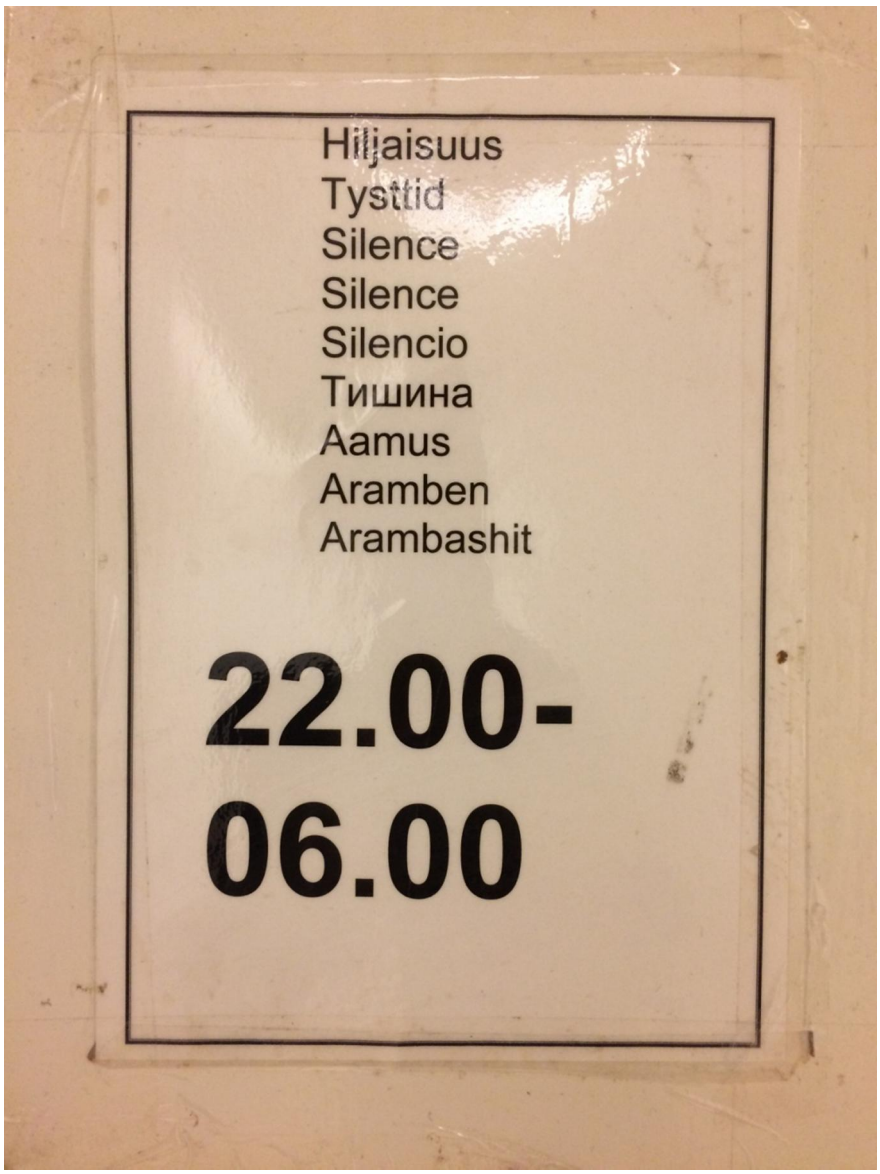


Figure A.


PESUKONEESEEN KUULUU VAIN VAATTEITA, EI KENKIÄ EIKÄ MATTOJA.
WASH ONLY CLOTHES IN THE WASHING MACHINE, NOT SHOES AND NOT CARPETS.
В СТИРАЛЬНОЙ МАШИНЕ НЕЛЬЗЯ СТИРАТЬ ТУФЛИ И КОВРЫ. ТОЛЬКО ОДЕЖДУ!
اغسل ملابس فقط في غسالة،
لا أحذية ولا سجاجيد
shutterstock

Figure B.


Please, take your clothes out of the downstairs drying room
floor. The floor has to be completely empty on _____.
We will throw away all clothes that are there after that date.
Siirtäisittekö omat vaatteet pois kuivaushuoneen lattiasta!
Lattian täytyy olla täysin tyhjä _____.
Me heitämme pois kaikki vaatteet, jotka ovat siellä vielä sen
jälkeen.

Figure C.

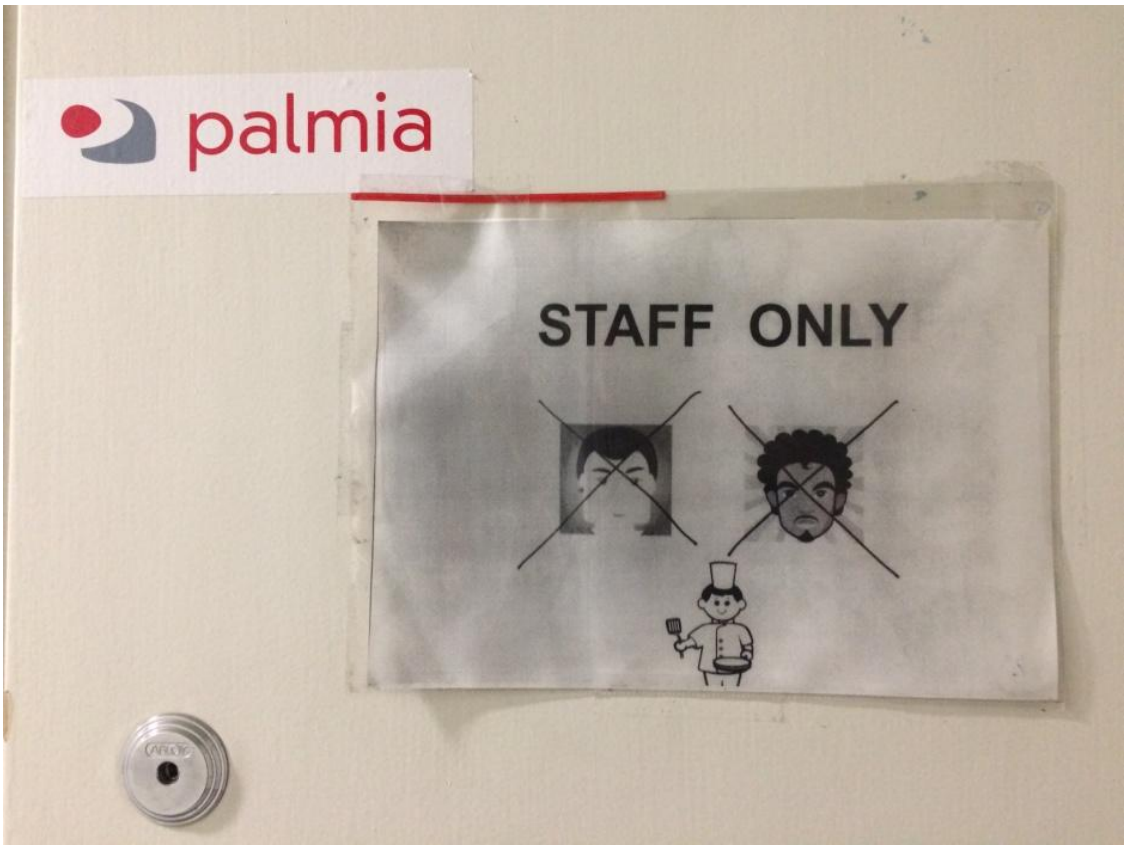


Figure D.


THE ELEVATOR IS ONLY FOR
THE ELDERLY
THE FAMILIES
THE DISABLED
GOING TO 6TH FLOOR

Figure E.


Vesi
TUPAKOINTI
KIELLETTY!!
NO SMOKING!!
To Nurse
К медсестре
ممرضة
To Social Worker
К соцработнице
عامل إجتماعي

Figure F.


Do not take knives, spoons, forks or plates out of the cafeteria.
Älä vie ruokalasta pois veitsiä, lusikoita, haarukoita tai lautasia.
Нельзя относить ножи, ложки, вилки или тарелки из столовой.
&
لطفا خارج نکنید
از صالون غذاخوری
چاقو ، قاشق، پنجه
و بشقاب د.

Figure G.

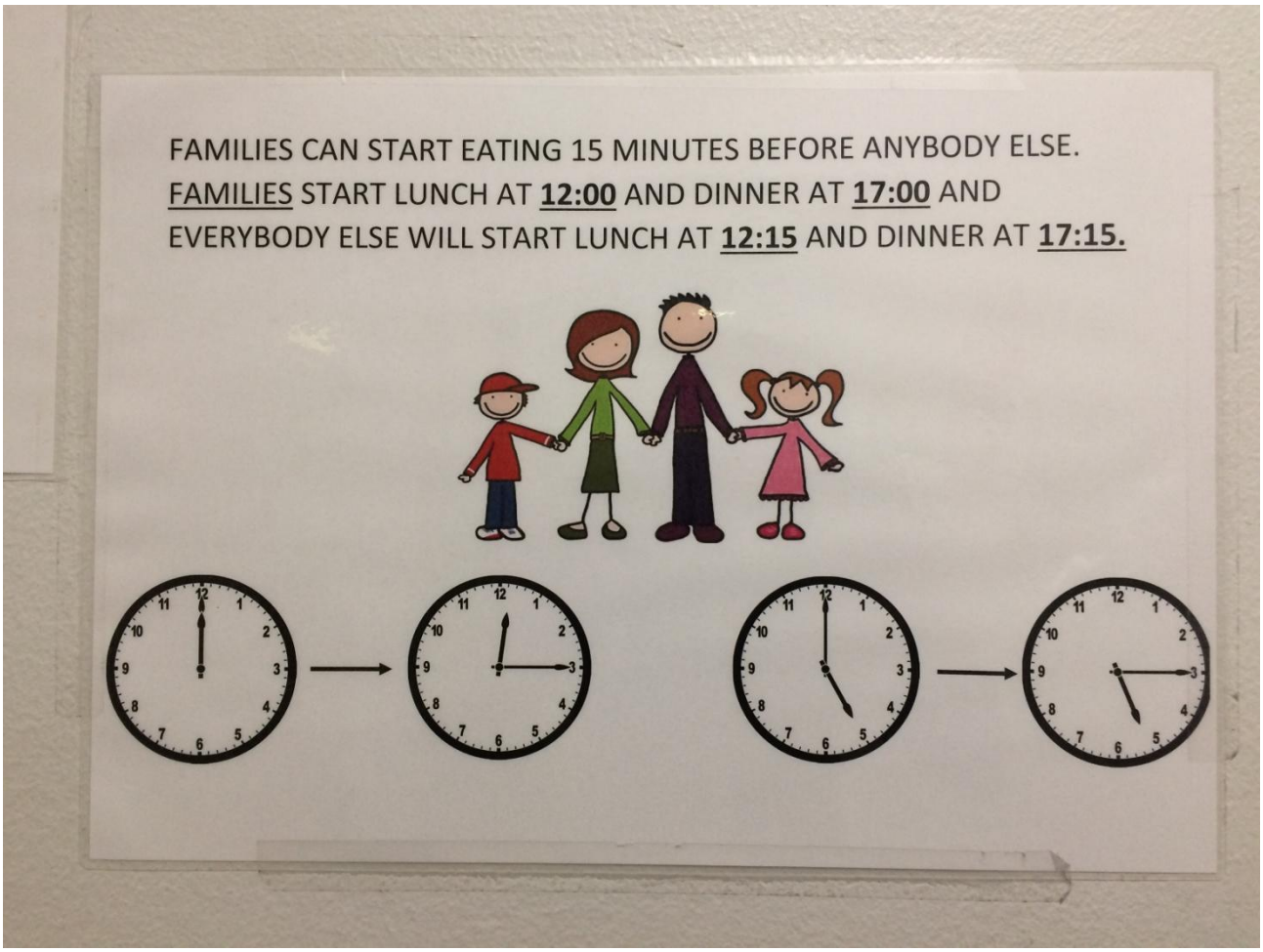


Figure H.

Figure I.


3. Kerros / 3rd floor
Terveydenhoitajat / nurses
VACCINATION
PLEASE
KNOCK ON THE DOOR ONLY IF YOU HAVE
AN APPOINTMENT WITH NURSE

Figure J.


Teetä ja kahvia ei saa viedä
termospulloissa, käyttäkää
kertakäyttömukeja
Please don't take away tea or coffee in
thermos, you should use plastic cups.
Вынос кофе и чая в термосах запрещён,
используйте пластиковые стаканчики

Figure K.

Figure L.

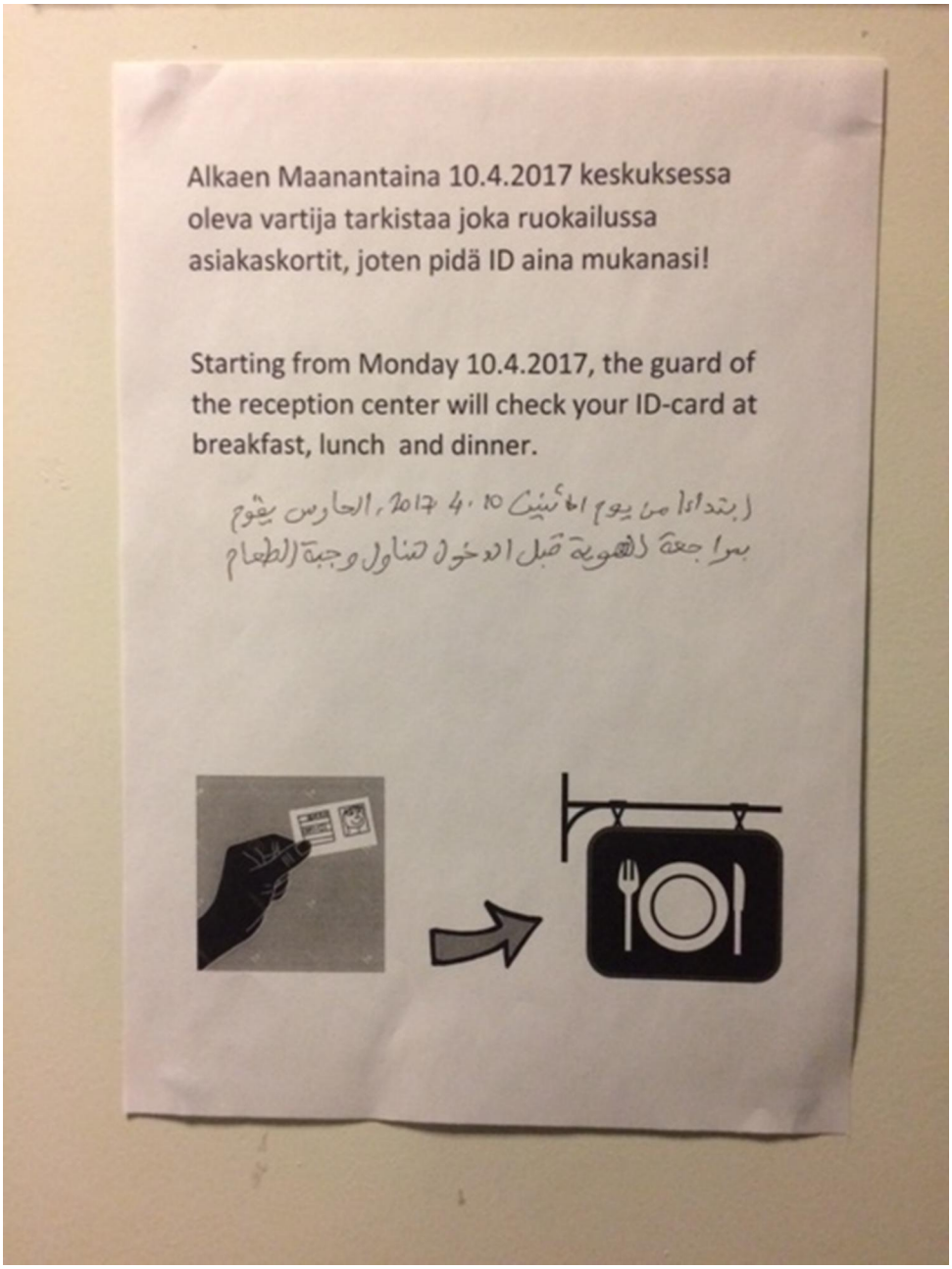


Figure M (Kaarlenkatu center).

Figure N (Kaarlenkatu center).